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all countries involve the same idea—the transfer of inscriptions and devices by pressure. The Chinese, from an early period, have actually printed, laboriously carving in relief on separate tablets of wood the contents of each page about to be reproduced. And if such was a practice of the Chinese, we may be sure it was the practice also of other Asiatic peoples, equally, if not more civilized, but who have undergone greater vicissitudes.

In Europe, whether learned from Asia or devised independently, block-printing, just before the invention of the movable types, was well-known, though not practised as extensively as in China, nor with the same skill and elegance. The manufacture of playing cards was one common application of the process, but a more noble use of it was in the production of books, especially illustrated books, the picture and the description or moralization being all carved on the same wooden plate. The best known European example of an illustrated volume printed from carved blocks, prior to the invention of movable types, is the *Biblia Pauperum Predicatorum*, a series of Scripture scenes rudely but boldly drawn, three on a page; the one in the middle from the New Testament, the other two from the Old; above and below are a pair of heads representing the prophets from whom respectively texts germane to the New Testament scene are quoted; all in Latin, with leonine descriptive verses subjoined; e.g., under a picture of the Adoration of the Magi: *Christus adoratur; aurum, thus, myrrha donatur*; and under the Burning Bush, *Lucet et ignescit, sed non rubus igne calescit*. Other remarkable early block-books are the *Speculum Humane Salvationis*, the *Ars Moriendi*, the *Ars Memorandi*, the *Historie Sancti Johannis Evangelistæ*, and various editions of Donatus, an elementary Latin grammar.

But up to 1440, or a little earlier, no one, as it would seem, while contemplating a carved block prepared for an impression, had as yet chanced to carry forward his thoughts just the one step which would have led him to the happy reflection: Seeing that all the words in a page are made up of letters again and again repeated, would it not be practicable, instead of carving perhaps all the letters of the alphabet two or three times over in each page, to make separate letters, which might be fastened together so as to form the words contained in one page; and then, after having done duty in the production of that page, be released, and combined together afresh for the production of another page; and so on repeatedly? At length, in 1440, or