

printed in the usual way. This makes wood engraving peculiarly suitable for the illustration of books. As far as quality of design is concerned, wood-cuts, in the hands of a skilful engraver, possess another advantage, because the artist can exhibit on the surface of the wood all the spirit of original first thoughts, and all the freedom for which the playful facility of the drawing pencil gives opportunity and scope. Wood-engraving, though now brought to a wonderful height in finish and brilliancy, cannot acquire the sharpness of touch, tenderness, and transparency of etching and line engraving on copper.

The last process to which your attention will be called is one which has partially superseded the manual operations of the engraver—it may be termed Machine-engraving. By the ruling-machine plain back-grounds and skies are formed, thereby saving considerable labour. For the engraving of bank-notes several machines have been invented, by means of which, practically, an unlimited number of patterns may be obtained. An instrument has been contrived by which copper-plate engravings are produced from medals and other objects in relief. It has been named the *Anaglyptograph*,—its sponsor, probably, had not read Charles Kingsley's playful satire upon the "scientific" language used by sundry learned Professors, or he would have found some name for the instrument which would be more readily understood by ordinary mortals. As the process, if described, would be tedious to those who have not a technical knowledge of mechanics, or are not familiar with mechanical art, it will be, perhaps, sufficient for them to know that the effect of this kind of engraving is very striking, and in some specimens gives a high degree of apparent relief. The outline and form of the figure arises from the sinuosities of the lines, and from their greater or less proximity. This kind of mechanical engraving has been practised on plate-glass, and is then additionally curious, from the circumstance of the fine lines being invisible, except in certain lights.

Among all the schemes devised for the purpose of rendering the forgery of bank-notes a matter of greater difficulty, this process seems the most feasible, although not yet put into practice.

There is among the Marlborough gems an onyx cameo. "Cupid and Psyche," of the most inimitable and exquisite workmanship, bearing the name of *Typhon*, a gem engraver who lived under the immediate successors of Alexander of Macedon, 300 years before Christ. It is a masterpiece of art, and is generally known from the admirable "engraving" of it by Bartolozzi. In it Cupid and Psyche are seen covered with a transparent veil: Cupid carries in his hand the mystic dove, the emblem of conjugal affection, and he and Psyche are led, linked together in a chain of pearls, by Hymen, bearing his torch, to the nuptial couch which a Genius is preparing for them.

Suppose such a cameo or medallion was the object from which the mechanical engraving was produced, it would be impossible to produce similar contour lines, either by hand or machine, without obtaining possession of the original gem.

The process may be objected to by some because engravings of this kind are not works of individual art, but merely manufactures, like photographs. True, but the engraver's art is employed in the production of the onyx gem, and great talent, if not genius, combined with manual dexterity are needed to produce the cameo.

If no other good object presented itself in the way of bank note engraving, this one would be subserved, namely, the promulgation of true Art. As copies of the Roman and Greek gems and medals and those of other ancient nations, besides those since the days of Charlemagne, collected and preserved in the European Museums, Libraries, and Universities could be reproduced by "*Anaglyptography*." To a man of poetical imagination these works of art are most entertaining from the fine personifications and symbols to be found on them, such as Happiness, Hope, Abundance, Security and Piety. Upon some the different countries known to the old Roman Empire are also delineated with great poetical imagery.

It affords patriotic satisfaction in particular to an Englishman, to see Great Britain often represented upon the earliest Imperial coins by a figure sitting on a globe, with a symbol of military power, the *labarum*, in her hand, and the ocean rolling under her feet. An emblem almost prophetic of the vast power which her dominion of the sea will always give her, provided she asserts her element of empire with honour, justice, and with due vigour and perseverance.

Copies of gems and medals of this quality would tend more to dignify art, and familiarize the public with the beauty of art than the effigies in print of Bank Presidents and officials, or the hackneyed emblems of Commerce and Agriculture; Steamships and Locomotive Engines; Cattle and Implements of Husbandry; and these, often, mere translations of photographs.

They would also, perhaps, have a tendency to correct the prevailing taste which prefers size to quality of impression and beauty of design. Hence arises the fact that our modern engravers and print publishers are much less sensitive of their reputation than the ancients were. During the early eras of the art of engraving, the artist, in a majority of instances, was, at once, painter, engraver, printer, and publisher. Generally speaking he selected his own subject; he embodied his first thought, in colour, or in chalk, on canvas, or on paper, transferred it to the copper or originated it on the plate at once, perfected it there,

infusing at every touch the individual soul of the first conception in all its complete unity.

It is recorded of Lucas van Leyden that, so jealous was he of his just fame, that, in working off impressions from his plates, he at once destroyed such as did not fully satisfy his own idea of perfection. It is also related of John Taylor Wedgwood, a relative of the famous old Josiah, the potter, that nothing would induce him to engrave anything which he believed to be untruthful, and it is said that he refused to engrave a portrait of Sir Hudson Lowe from a painting which he considered was not life-like. If the engravers of the present day followed the example of Leyden and Wedgwood, we should not have our auction rooms glutted with prints from worn out, re-touched and repaired plates; neither should we have our good taste and better feelings offended by the contemptible prints which embellish and adorn much of our modern literature. Nor should we have our shop-windows dressed with bad impressions of plates produced by a combination of mezzo-tinto, aqua tinta, etching, scraping, stippling and any means, whether artist like or not, so they be cheap and expeditious—any kind of work provided "there's money in it." If we are to return to the purer and nobler principles of Art that animated our master engravers, it must be by some better spirit than that which now walks the earth. That which the old philosophy stigmatized as the incentive to all evil, longer experience proves to be also the impediment to all good.

Speaking of the Fine Arts, of which engraving is and ought always to be one, Sir David Wilkie says:—

"This most ennobling of all studies, this most unsordid of all pursuits, must be followed by a fine heart and a disinterested mind. If the glories of Art are not sought for their own sake, they had better not be sought at all. If gain alone were its glory, it should be a forbidden study, and prohibited from the very prostitution of soul which in such minds it occasions."

What a glorious thing it would be to emancipate Art from its incongruous alliance with money making and selfishness. Alas! this is not the age of miracles!

Prints are met with, executed some by one, some by another of the several methods before mentioned, to the exclusion of all the rest; but in modern prints,—or engravings, which public usage, the sole arbiter of all language, has chosen to adopt for their name,—the methods of Line, etching, and dotting or stippling are employed in one and the same plate. We find wood and copper plate engraving practised in both hemispheres, and we find each country or nation shewing some express mannerism, peculiarity of style distinguishing its work from the performance of others.

We find that prints are still in existence by artists who lived about four centuries ago, and that a very great variety of specimens remain by artists who have lived in succession, at all intervening periods from the invention of engraving to the present time. We find varieties also in the subject-matter of these various engravers;—some have confined themselves chiefly to portraits; others to landscapes;—some to historical subjects; others to rural scenes, cattle, horses, &c.;—some to battles and combats; others to marine views and shipping;—some to natural history; others to still life.

So with collectors of prints, the connoisseur or virtuoso selects them capriciously,—one by schools, Italian, German, Dutch, French, or English; another by subjects either historical, pastoral, comical, tragical, devotional or sensational; individual taste and feeling varying as much in these matters as in the choice of oil paintings, water-colour drawings, ceramics, or statuary; or in the preference for one poet or prose writer over another;—Strange, Sharp, Woollett, Willmore, Finden, Landseer, Reynolds, and Cousens have their devotees, in the same way that Shakspeare, Milton, Butler, Dryden, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Addison, Defoe, Fielding and Scott have theirs.

The arts of painting and engraving have their hold upon the human heart as strongly as the sonorous and noble verse of the poet. The Fine Arts, like Science, have tended to increase the sum of human happiness by calling new pleasures into existence. If the gift of a lively fancy is an important requisite to every physical observer, and that this faculty has been conspicuous among all the great discoverers, such as Bacon and Newton, Dalton and Watt, Franklin and Faraday, so will it be to the engraver. In the fanciful and curious network of lines and translation of colours, and, as it were, the very touch and manner of the original picture or painting, imagination's power may be traced in the works of Marc Antonio Raimondi, Morggen, Müller, and others, whose prints live in all their pristine beauty to-day, while the sublime conceptions of Michael Angelo, the pathos and expression of Raphael, the magic tints of Titian, the harmony and grace of Correggio, the exquisite designs of Parmegiano, and the wonderful chiaro-scuro of Liornado da Vinci, have in some instances mouldered from their walls or deserted their canvasses.

IRRESOLUTION.

Some men are born with a natural infirmity of character which, if humoured, amounts to an inability to make up their minds, to keep to one intention, to regard any decision as final. A variety of causes may seem to underlie