

colour, so highly did he appreciate it as a work of art. Schoen's prints are without date, and the time of his birth is unknown, but he died in 1486.

Another mode is called Etching. In this the metal is covered with wax, or varnish, or some resinous composition, technically called "ground"; the design is then traced with a fine steel point or etching needle, which cuts through the ground in its progress and leaves bare the metal throughout the line which it draws; after this the plate is exposed to the action of aqua fortis, which only bites into the parts laid bare by the etching needle, the other parts of the plate being protected by the ground laid on for the purpose. The depth of the line is regulated by the strength of the aqua fortis and the length of time the metal is exposed to its action. When the engraver thinks the lines are sufficiently bit in, or corroded, he pours off the liquid and well rinses the plate with water, and then removes the "etching ground" by means of turpentine or some other solvent. The engraving is then finished with the graver or "dry-point."

Another mode of etching is by the dry-point alone, without resorting to the action of aqua fortis. This mode consists in scratching the design on bare metal with an etching-needle.

These systems or modes of etching enable the artist to work with greater freedom and to give more play to his fancy. An unrestrained liberty of execution is the characteristic of etching. The process is not essentially different from drawing, the etching-point follows the slightest impulse of the hand.

The invention of this mode of engraving, if it may be called so, is attributed to Albert Durer, who, from his varied talents and the excellence he displayed in every branch of art that he attempted, is entitled to rank with the most extraordinary men of his age. As an engraver on copper he greatly excelled all who preceded him. In his designs on wood we perceive not only more correct drawing and a greater knowledge of composition, but also a much more effective combination of light and shade than are to be found in any woodcuts executed before the beginning of the 16th century.

So highly did the Emperor Maximilian think of the engraving of Durer, that he ordered the copper plate, upon which was engraved *The Conversion of Saint Eustachius*, to be filled with fine gold, in order to preserve its beauties and to enshrine it for ever as a work of art. The plate thus filled with gold is still preserved in the Imperial Library at Vienna.

Etching is used by all engravers in their skies, also in delicate foliage, architectural ruins, distant mountains, and other parts of the picture requiring great tenderness.

The prints which are called *Etchings* will generally be found to be original designs of the engravers, and in many cases struck off at once, and exhibiting all the spirit of original first thoughts, and all the freedom for which the playful facility of the etching needle gives opportunity and scope. On the other hand, prints, to which the word engravings are applied, will generally be found to be translations, not *copies*, of works originally executed in oil or water-colour.

As Line-engraving and Etching have their respective advantages and deficiencies, artists have endeavoured to unite their powers by joining the freedom of the one with the strength of the other; their successful union has produced the happiest effects.

Large plates, in general, require a force and power of execution which is scarcely to be produced by the mere operation of the etching-needle, and demand the vigorous aid of the graver.

There is yet another mode called *Mezzotinto*—its operation is in direct opposition to that of Line-engraving and Etching. In Mezzotinto the effect is produced by clearing the lights: in Line-engraving and Etching the shadows are traced on the plate. The essential excellence of Mezzotinto is mellowness, and it is from thence that it is peculiarly adapted to portraits and historical subjects.

The process here is to rake and scratch the copper plate all over in every direction, covering it with incisions so close and so crossed, that if an impression in ink were taken from the plate in this state, it would present an uniformly dark bar or ground. The design is then traced upon the plate, the depth of dark is lowered by burnishing the plate down in parts required to be light, and so more and more, producing intermediate tints and absolute lights, until the design comes out in all its proper gradations of shadow. There are other modes, such as dotting or stippling, performed with a punch and mallet—engraving in dots—called *opus mallei*. The design is first etched and is afterwards harmonized. The style is well suited or adapted for portraits.

Aqua-Tinta, a style of engraving, the effect of which is similar to drawings in bistre or Indian ink. In this process the ground, which is composed of pulverized resin and spirits of wine, assumes when dry a granulated form; and the action of aqua fortis, acting between the particles, reduces the surface to a state that an impression from it resembles a tint or wash of colour on paper. Aqua-Tints have been superseded by Lithography, about which a few words will be necessary, although it is not a branch of art that strictly comes under the head of Engraving. It is a chemical process. The design is drawn on prepared stone, with a crayon of a peculiar composition, and of a nature to receive and retain printing ink applied to it, the stone being of a nature to repel the ink and take no stain from it.

RETURNED WITH THANKS.

Many people of literary tastes have had cause to wish that the printed books which they lend to their friends were returned as speedily and as surely as their own books in manuscript when offered to publishers. If they oblige an acquaintance with the loan of a fifth-rate novel, the chances are that they never see it again; but if they send a learned and profound work of their own to a publisher, it is pretty certain to come back like steel to the loadstone. The few persons who have never written a book can hardly realize the feelings aroused by the unwelcome return on the author's hands of a work which had been intended to astonish the world. Judging from the books which it is our business to look over, we should imagine that no nonsense of any kind would be refused by publishers in these days, were we not assured by those who ought to know that the amount of rejected manuscript at the present time is greater than ever. Never having written a book ourselves, we cannot speak from personal experience of the woes or pleasures of authors, but we have had some opportunities of observing the symptoms and phases of the book-making mania in others.

In his heart, almost everybody thinks that he could write a book; and we are sure every woman does. Let no one persuade himself that he is an exception to the rule, or the hour of temptation may come upon him when least expected. We hesitate to describe the life of the man who has listened to the voice of the demon of book-writing. The inducements offered to him by the tempter are amusement, self-glorification, and lucre; and he is fool enough to believe that he will obtain all three. It is easy to take the first fatal step. The important fact that the novice is "writing something" is at first kept a profound secret; but, like other secrets, it is confided to friend after friend and acquaintance after acquaintance, until the thrilling news is widely spread. "How is your book getting on?" becomes a stock question with most of the intimates of the writer; and, before he has finished a quarter of it, he is perpetually asked whether his "book is published yet." He at once feels himself exalted to the proud position of a literary man. He is quite above the common herd, and, forgetting the universality of the accomplishment, he feels that he has a right to expect deference and respect, for is he not "writing a book"? His own convenience and that of all his belongings is made subservient to the all-important manufacture of his precious volumes. He carefully endeavours to discover the hours and conditions most suited to his literary faculties. He tries writing before breakfast, before dinner, and so on. He coaxes his muse with coffee, Apollinaris water, cigars, or medicine. We remember reading in a sensational novel of a character of the Guy Livingstone type who observed that he was possessed by a devil—which was true enough, in a sense—and that he fed it with brandy. Some young authors might feel disposed to re-echo the first part of this observation, and to add to that, do what they might, they could find no food that would agree with their guest. As regards material appliances, all sorts of experiments are made. Many varieties of paper, pens, and ink-bottles are tested. The best of desks or writing chairs will not always make the pen go quickly, and even "the literary machine" has been known to fail to produce well-rounded periods. The novice is surprised to find what a bulk of manuscript is required to fill one moderate volume of print. He is even more astonished, if he is at all critical of his own work, at the persistence with which the same words and phrases recur on every page. Commas, colons, and semicolons are a snare to him, and he must be far above the average if spelling does not often prove a difficulty. Fortunately a dictionary on his writing table may remove the last-named stumbling-block, and he will be happy if he resists the temptation to put a book of French or Latin quotations by the side of the crutch to his mother-tongue. He has of course shown his talent as an author by conceiving life-like characters worthy of Lytton, Thackeray, or Dickens; but although he pipes to them, they will not dance. He has woven an intricate plot, comprising a murder, a divorce, a suicide, and a happy marriage; but he finds the greatest difficulty in making his imaginary puppets talk, and the labour of concocting their jokes and smart repartees is a pain and a weariness to him. He endeavours to persuade himself that he finds writing an amusement; but when he goes ink-stained from the fray to take a little luncheon he has his doubts whether the fun of the thing has not been overrated.

At any rate man cannot be happy without sympathy, and the would-be author calls in a friend or two to his assistance, who are invited as a special favour to read what is technically termed the "copy." At their suggestion he makes a few alterations in the plot, improves the principal characters, and makes various excisions and additions. The margins of the manuscript are scribbled over in a cramped handwriting, and pieces of paper are gummed on here and there, while sundry surgical operations are performed with a pair of scissors. Perhaps the writer is fortunate enough to know a real author—a man who has not only written a book, but lived to see it in print; and this authority is respectfully requested to read as much of the book as has been already finished, and give his candid and unbiassed opinion thereon. Unable to escape from this delicate and wearisome duty, the unhappy critic carries off the precious writings, when he probably finds them so utterly beneath criticism that he can do nothing but offer a few commonplace remarks, with his best wishes