

integrity consists of pictorial symbols representing objects and ideas, and amounting in number to no fewer than 40,000; and a student who aims at even moderate proficiency must face the appalling task of imprinting accurately on his brain the bewildering forms of at least 10,000 or 12,000 ideographs, or combinations of lines, curves, and points, of which, though very many may be drawn by three or four strokes apiece with the brush, the rest need from ten to upwards of forty distinct movements of the hand for their delineation." In Japan, however, besides this system there has existed for more than a thousand years a syllabary called the *Kana*, which consists of highly-abbreviated forms of these Chinese characters that correspond with the forty-seven syllabic sounds that enter into the Japanese language; and to the mass of the Japanese people the *Kana* has been a great boon, since it has placed within their reach the arts of writing and reading, which but for it were far beyond them. But in the rapid course of that process of demolition and reconstruction which began after the restoration of the Mikado in 1868, and which has been recognized as the most remarkable of its kind in the history of nations, it has been felt that the *Kana* also was too cumbersome, and that the want of a simple and easy script would stand very much in the way of that complete communication between Japan and the Western world desired by Japan. An attempt was made about three years ago by a literary association to effect a complete substitution of *Kana* for the Chinese system, which proved futile; but as a consequence of the failure some of the ablest members of the association came afterward to see that there could be no real relief except by discarding the existing methods in favour of a purely alphabetical system, in which the letters should be used solely according to their phonetic values. It was found that twenty-two letters of the Roman alphabet would answer this purpose—the *l*, *q*, *v*, and *x* not being needed in Japanese; and then was founded early last year the Roma-ji Kai (Roman Alphabet Association), having for its object the devising and dissemination of a consistent method of spelling Japanese words in Roman letters. The Association already numbers nearly six thousand of the leading men of the governing, educational, and literary classes of Japan; and a complete scheme of spelling, according to the standard of pronunciation of the educated people of the capital, has been drawn up, the consonants being taken at their English, the vowels at their Italian, value.

THE imagination delights to dwell on the probable effects of this important step. There has long been a tendency to establish English as the dominant foreign tongue in Japan: an attempt many years ago of the Japanese Government to make English the language of diplomatic intercourse was for some reason discouraged by the British legation; yet a later similar attempt in another sphere has had more success. English is now taught, by decree of the State, in the primary schools throughout the country; English ideas are permeating every rank of society and are paramount in the system of education; and in the higher walks of learning, among the educated classes, the philosophy of Mill, Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley has overturned not only Confucian ethics and studies, but also the later and favourite philosophy of Choo He. With these classes the Christian missionaries, in combating Confucianism, Buddhism, or Shinto (which last is now a superstition fallen almost to the level of folk-lore), are engaged in slaying the slain. The whole educated portion of the nation will soon be given up wholly to Spencerian theories and systems: just as readily as Japan took up Chinese philosophy twelve centuries ago does she now assimilate European philosophy, choosing the most advanced point of it. To our mind this is a most fortunate conjuncture of circumstances. That philosophy is indeed largely destructive, but it can destroy nothing of real value. It may, and it is to be hoped will, break down the mass of superstitious and pagan habits and traditions that still cling about Christianity; but it cannot injure the true body of Christianity lying almost concealed behind these; and it is a most happy circumstance that Japan, placing herself beside advanced Western thought, will be able to take up Christianity, when the time is come,—as the West itself will retake it up,—free from the false interpretations that but a very few years ago would have given her an entirely erroneous conception of its meaning. It may yet be that some great Oriental nation, converted to Christianity, and yet abreast with the age, may show us the true figure of the Church of the gospel.

ELECTROGRAVURE is the title given by Frederick Juengling, the well-known artist and engraver, to a process newly perfected by him. It consists in the cutting of the drawing on a boxwood block with a graver or needle in indented lines. An electrotype is made from this block and the printing accomplished on a plate press like that of a regular etching. The block used is like that employed in wood engraving and the tools are the same.

The difference is that while the lines which appear black in a woodcut are raised, those which come black in an electrogravure are depressed, just as those in an engraving on metal are. The advantages in speed and accuracy which this process guarantees over that of etching will be manifest to all acquainted with the requirements of that art. The quality of the work produced, cleanness of line and force of colour, render it a strong candidate for consideration among the reproductive processes. The *Art Union* for December gives as frontispiece a powerful reproduction of a black and white drawing by Muhrman, "The Smoker," which illustrates the possibilities of the process very strikingly.

THERE is a growing and commendable tendency on the part of the more prominent musicians, vocal and instrumental, toward a revolt against the encore nuisance. The singer would be poorly paid, indeed, even at the salary of a Patti, who, at the climax of his or her performance, was left to walk off the stage without a plaudit; but because an artist has performed one task well is no reason that another should be demanded. The compliment, in that case, is on the part of the artist, not the audience. It is out of the custom of applauding a performer that the practice of recalling him for a repetition of his performance has grown. At first the shout of applause was enough; it in time advanced to the conferring of the laurel, until the singer himself set the initiative by coming forward to repeat his song. The encore system of the day owes whatever exaggeration it develops as much to the performer as to the public which testifies its homage by refusing to be surfeited by his art. Beginning as a tribute to his art, it has simply become one to his vanity.

*Le Ménestrel* relates that a rich French amateur died lately, leaving a superb Stradivarius quartet of instruments which cost him no less than 66,250 francs. One of the four is a violin, which Stradivarius is said to have called his "Song of the Swan," because it was the last instrument which was turned out of his hands. It bears the date of 1737, the very year in which Stradivarius died, then ninety-three years old. Up to the present time, experts have cited as the last specimen of the old maker's art a violin which belonged to the Count de Salabue, and bears the date of the preceding year, 1736. The authenticity of the four instruments is undoubted. The following are their dates and what they cost their late owner:—1, a violin bearing the date of 1737, and known as the "Song of the Swan," cost 17,000 francs; 2, a violin bearing the date of 1704, cost 12,750 francs; 3, a tenor bearing the date of 1728, cost 19,000 francs; and, 4, a violoncello bearing the date of 1696, cost 17,500 francs, making a sum total of 66,250 francs.

REALISTIC restaurants are becoming the fashion in Paris. First was started the Lion d'or, which was furnished in the style of the period of Louis XV., and where the waiters were costumed like dandies of that age. Then came the Dead Rat and the Black Cat, and now the Galleys has been opened by M. Lisbonne. On the walls are portraits of well-known convicts, the fair sex being represented by Louise Michel; but the picture in the place of honour is a representation of Henri Rochefort escaping from New Caledonia. The waiters are chained together, and are got up to perfection in the prison dress, green caps and red jackets, and their hair is cropped close. The next realistic restaurant promised to be opened will be in the Place Pigalle, and it is to be called the Abbey of Thélème, with monks and nuns for waiters and barmaids. It is a curious craze, this naturalism, but it might just as well be devoted towards dainty as towards repulsive results.

THE *London Times*, in concluding an editorial on the Irish elections and the means employed by Mr. Parnell's agents to secure a Nationalist majority, says: "What would become of Ireland, and what would be the fate of her loyal minority, if all the agencies of law and order were placed in the hands of the determined enemies of England? In this connexion the extract from a letter of Mr. Goldwin Smith which Mr. Roundell sends us this morning is deserving of very serious consideration, and we commend it to the attention of the Government which will have to prepare a measure of local government for Ireland. 'It is curious,' writes Mr. Goldwin Smith, 'that, just when Disunionists are proposing to make Ireland happy with Home Rule, the Legislature of Massachusetts finds itself obliged to take the police out of the hands of the city of Boston on account of the growth of the Irish element, and the consequent disorder and corruption.'"

THE Sultan of Turkey lately ordered a performance of "Belisario" for the entertainment of the ladies of his harem, who are principally Georgian and Circassian girls who had never seen an opera. The blind "Belisario" was superbly sung by a basso, who groped about the stage, and so tunefully