

Introduction.

In this, the Third Exhibition of Black and White, the examples shewn are chiefly original etchings, supplemented by a few mezzotints and engravings and as the processes employed for their production are interesting, a few notes are now given which may serve to explain them.

Etching is without doubt one of the most expressive of these forms of artistic expression, its freedom, suggestiveness and power appealing, perhaps, more especially to the highly trained artist than to the amateur; but still to the latter full of the greatest interest and always gaining in interest, as the reasons for its artistic beauty are unfolded.

Many of the greatest artists delighted in expressing themselves by etching, while still producing other great pictures, chiefly, perhaps, because working with the needle on the smooth copper plate presented no obstacle to a rapid yet firm and certain expression of the inspiration of the moment, differing in this from engraving, with its more lengthy, studied and precise methods. Few great painters were engravers, the great exception being Albrecht Dürer whose original engraved work stands alone.

To produce a fine etching, however, is given but to a few, and real success may be attained only by those of high artistic temperament and natural aptitude, and of long experience in the technical part of the work. Perhaps the greatest difficulty to be overcome is the difficulty of arriving at the relative weights or values of dark which the artist desires: perfect tonality is hard to obtain. But the great etchers have, to a large extent, conquered this by judicious selection of a few tones so well placed that the imagination easily fills up the intervals between them.