vol. 40. 2

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# Wood-Engraving.

DURING the last twenty years, it will have been observed how great has been the increase of works containing wood-engravings either for the purpose of illustration or embellishment. In the present sheet are several of this species of wood-cuts or engravings, and few publications of a cheap class are now issued without them. Usually less delicate and minute than engravings on copper or steel, wood-cuts possess a peculiar value, from the comparative ease with which they can be printed. While plate embellishments require to be produced by a process so tedious, that a man can with difficulty execute 250 impressions in a day, a wood-engraving can be printed with great rapidity by a machine to the extent of many thousands daily. The chief value of the wood-cut, however, consists in its being adapted for printing along with letterpress. It is inserted among the types by the compositor, and impressions come from it along with the letterpress which it is intended to illustrate. Hence, a wood-cut is to be described as *a type*—a thing which produces representations by being stamped on paper, after having been inked for the purpose. The reason why wood-engravings possess these qualities over metal plates is, because the figures or marks to be shown in print are left raised on the wood, the parts not to be printed being cut away. This is the reverse of the principle of metal-plate engraving, in which the figures or

marks are sunk, and hence the difficulty of effecting impressions with any degree of rapidity.

The art of carving figures in relief on the face of a piece of wood, and then stamping the figures, blackened with ink, on paper or some other light fabric, is of great antiquity. The Chinese have for ages stamped or printed books in this rude manner. In Germany, the first attempts at printing with a press were effected by wooden blocks, which, however, were soon abandoned, in consequence of the invention of printing by moveable types. Previously, the subjects stamped in Germany were for the greater part of a devotional kind, such as representations of saints, for distribution by the clergy as aids in devotion. One of the earliest wood-cuts known was found in a convent not far from Augsburg, with the date 1423 upon it; it is a representation of St Christopher, and is now, or was lately, in the possession of Earl Spenser. Besides being employed to illustrate devotional subjects, wood-engraving was used in Germany for marking the figures on playing-cards; and, what is somewhat remarkable, the rude figures of these early times are represented with little or no improvement of taste on the playing-cards of the present day.

Immediately before, and also after the invention of printing, the practice of issuing small books composed entirely of wood-cuts, representing Scripture subjects, was common in different continental countries. The people not being able to read, were in this manner impressed with glimmering ideas of sacred history. Remarkable incidents mentioned in the books of Moses, the gospels, and the apocalypse of St John, were thus made known to the less instructed classes, but generally in connexion with legends of the middle ages. Some works of this class were called "*Biblia Pauperum*"—Poor Men's Books; and copies of them are now extremely rare. One of them, on a reduced scale, representing St John preaching to three men and a woman, as is expressed in the Latin blazon over their head, forms the illustration at the head of the present sheet.

By such devices was the piety of our unlettered forefathers excited: the instruction being communicated to the understanding through the eye, as it is now more generally conveyed through the ear.

Wood-engraving, for the sake of illustrating printed copies of the Scriptures, was brought to extraordinary perfection by Albert Durer at the end of the fifteenth century. Instead of hard outlines, the figures were now finely shaded, and an elegant picture produced. Throughout the sixteenth century the art flourished in Holland, Germany, and Italy, and had many eminent professors. As printing advanced, it may be said to have declined; the eye and the feelings were less appealed to than formerly; the intellect of the people was opening, though it may be admitted their taste was not correspondingly improved. Towards the con-

clusion of the seventeenth century the art of wood-engraving had fallen into neglect; but in the eighteenth century it began to revive in France and England, and some good illustrations were produced. It remained, however, not in a brilliant condition, till it was taken up by Thomas Bewick of Newcastle-on-Tyne—an extraordinary self-taught enthusiast in the art. Bewick began a series of illustrations for a history of quadrupeds about 1785, and the work, when issued in 1790, attracted much attention. This work, and others on natural history, executed by Bewick, were remarkable for possessing a small order of engravings on wood, called *tail-pieces*, from being given at the terminations of chapters. Many of these sketches abounded in dry humour, and were highly relished by the increasing body of general readers. At the conclusion of the present sheet we give a copy of one of these tail-pieces—a poor sheep in the starvation of winter picking at an old broom—a scene, trifling as it seems, which tells a woful tale of suffering.

Wood-engraving was now raised to the rank of a regular profession in England, and was greatly advanced by Nesbit, Harvey, Branston, and Thomson, both as respects elegance of design and execution. In France and England its professors have latterly been numbered by hundreds.

We now proceed to explain how the art is practised.

## PRACTICE OF WOOD-ENGRAVING—THE WOOD.

The pieces of wood employed in wood-engraving are usually termed *blocks*. These are invariably of the box-tree—a species of wood exceedingly fine in the grain. The tree is cut across in slices with a fine saw, and the slices, after being planed smooth on the surface, are cut into square blocks of the required size. The blocks must be exactly one inch in depth—such being the height of the printing types in which they are to stand. When a block of more than from six to eight inches square is wanted, it is necessary to join two or more pieces together, as the box-tree is too limited in diameter to furnish blocks of a large size. Blocks ready for use, of any required size, are to be had from the carpenters who supply printers with furniture for their presses, likewise from turners of fine wood, and other tradesmen. The price of a block of half the size of the present page is about eighteenpence.

As in every other article, there are good and bad qualities of wood: that which is preferable ought to be as smooth on the surface as the finest paper, perfectly level, perfectly dry, and of a uniform yellow colour, without knots or flaws. When the tint is a darkish-red, the wood will most likely prove brittle; and when very light, it may be spongy, and will absorb ink when the cut comes to be printed. Some of the light tinted wood has the appearance of satin-wood. Upon this no attempt should be made to engrave, it being utterly useless. Wood of various

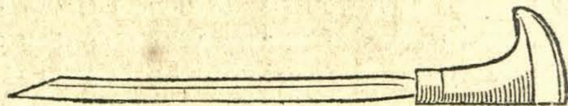
colours—as, for instance, that which is dark in the middle of the disk, and gradually getting light towards the edges—if not well dried or seasoned, is also not good; when of this kind, the cuts will warp, and be useless to the printer. After being used, the printer, for his own sake, should carefully wash and dry the cuts, and lay them aside in a cupboard.

## TOOLS.

The following are the articles required by the engraver on wood :—

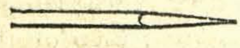
1. A round flattish pad, made of leather, and filled with sand, on which to rest the block while engraving it.

2. Gravers. A graver is a tool about four inches long, made of steel, with a small head or handle of wood. One side of the handle is flat, to allow the tool to rest steadily when set down. The blade or steel part of the tool is various in shape; some blades are thin, others are more thick. As it is the point of the blade which cuts, the more sharp the blade is, so may the edge be ground fine in proportion. Six or eight degrees of fineness are usually employed; the finest being for the more delicate lines and markings, and the broader-pointed for cutting broad and bold lines. One or more of the gravers require to be slightly bent in the blades, to permit excavating hollowed parts. The shape of the point of this tool, as seen on its upper side, is here represented.



A slightly bent graver.

3. Tint-tools. These are tools of various degrees of fineness, suitable to the fineness or coarseness of the tint required to be cut. While it is the object of gravers to cut lines in various directions, and of various lengths, also markings of a miscellaneous kind, tint-tools are chiefly employed to cut parallel lines close together, representing the tints of the sky. The tint-tool has a thinner blade than the graver, and, as is shown in the annexed cut, is much more tapering and sharp at the point.



4. A flat or gouge tool, for cutting away blank spaces at the edges, and trimming the cut.

5. A hone or Turkey stone, on which to sharpen the various tools, and bring their edge to any required degree of slope.

6. A burnisher.

7. An inking slab, a dabber, and a small quantity of fine printing ink, as afterwards specified.

8. India paper, on which to take proofs.

9. Two or three fine and hard black-lead pencils.

A sufficient stock of the foregoing apparatus for an amateur learner need not cost above twenty or thirty shillings.

## PROCESS—DRAWING.

Equipped with the proper tools and a few small blocks, the learner is ready to begin his operations. There is, however, something to be done preliminary to engraving: this is the drawing of the figures to be engraved on the wood. The ability to draw with neatness and precision, also a knowledge of effect in light and shade, are indispensable in the amateur wood-cutter, or any one who desires to rise in the profession. There are indeed wood-engravers who do not ordinarily draw, the designs being put on the blocks by artists of celebrity, but to this class we do not address ourselves.* We are solicitous that no young persons, male or female, who wish to instruct themselves in wood-engraving, should think of making the attempt till they can draw on the wood the subjects which they propose to execute. This degree of skill is not alone necessary for the purpose of rendering wood-engravers independent of artists; it is also requisite to enable them to give effect to the designs which artists put on the wood. Sometimes the designs are not made by black-lead pencils, but by various shades of Indian ink, laid on with camel-hair pencils; and the effect of these various shadings requires to be brought out by lines and marks of different kinds —all the invention of the engraver.

Besides mere drawing, modern improvements have added another branch to this department of the art, which is called "lowering." The surface of the block being perfectly level, it is obvious that, while being printed at a press equally true and even, every line left standing on the cut receives an equal degree

* We regret to say that among artists generally, there are few who seem able, or who are inclined, to furnish wood-engravers with drawings. All who are acquainted with the practice of wood-engraving, will agree with Mr Jackson in the following strictures:—"In this respect [drawing on wood] we are far, very far behind our French neighbours: the more common kind of French wood-cuts containing figures are much superior to our own of the same class; the drawing is much more correct; more attention is paid to costume; and in the details, we perceive the indications of much greater knowledge of art than is generally to be found in the productions of our second-rate occasional designers on wood. It cannot be said that this deficiency results from want of encouragement; for a designer on wood, of even moderate abilities, is better paid for his drawings than a second-rate painter is for his pictures. The truth is, that a taste for correct drawing is not sufficiently cultivated in England: our artists will be painters before they can draw, and hence comparatively few can make a good design on wood. They require the aid of positive colours to deceive the eye, and prevent it from resting upon the defects of their drawing. It is therefore of great importance that a wood-engraver should have some knowledge of drawing himself, in order that he may be able to correct many of the defects that are to be found in the commoner kind of subjects sent to him to be engraved. The superiority of French artists in all that relates to design, is as apparent in their lithographs as in their wood-engravings."

of pressure. The finest lines forming a sky, for instance, receive an equal weight and impress with the deepest and broadest shadow. Now, this is manifestly not as it should be; for fine lines ought to be printed lightly, and dark ones heavily. To obviate this, in printing the commoner class of cuts, the pressman lays small patches of paper below his sheet, opposite the spots to be printed more darkly than others; but this mode of patching fails to a considerable degree in making fine work, and a surer plan for bringing up the effect at press, consists in slightly lowering certain parts of the surface of the block.

Lowering may be effected as follows:—Sketch the design on the block, and then scrape away with the scooper those parts to be printed lightly; for example, the sky and the edges of trees, the whole in various degrees, according to the degree of required lightness. We desire to add, that beginners should not trouble themselves with this process, as it applies only to an advanced class of exercises. If lowered, the designs will require to be re-sketched on the wood; but whether lowered or not, the surface of the block must be prepared in the manner now to be described.

The surface of the block being too smooth to receive the markings of a pencil, it is roughened, and at the same time delicately whitened all over with moistened powder of Bath brick and flake white, and the palm of the hand is afterwards passed over the block, to remove from it any gritty particles. When dry, it is ready for the drawing, which is now put upon it, care being taken that nothing is marked which is not to stand in relief. On being finished, the drawing appears to be a minute and perfect sketch on a white ground.

Besides being able to draw, the learner should be acquainted with the practice of copying and reducing from prints. For example, a wood-engraving three inches long by two inches broad, is required to be made from a print twelve inches long and eight inches broad. In this, as in all other cases, it is necessary to copy everything in exact proportion. A square frame, on which threads are stretched lengthwise and crosswise, leaving square openings, is laid on the print. Small squares to the same number are now lightly traced on the wood, and whatever parts lie within any opening in the frame, are copied within the corresponding opening or square on the wood: thus a copy in exact proportion is obtained.

As pencil-drawing is very apt to be blurred or partly effaced by touching with the hand, it is necessary to cover the block, while working upon it, with a piece of paper. A slip of smooth hard writing-paper is the best for this purpose; it should be neatly folded over the edges, and tied firmly round with a thread. On beginning to cut, tear off a piece of the paper from the part to which the tool is to be applied; and so remove the paper as the work proceeds.

## ENGRAVING—FIRST EXERCISES.

Persons with weak sight use a strong magnifying glass when engraving, or when closely examining the appearance of their work. We would recommend beginners to avoid using a glass, if possible, for it injures the sight with the naked eye. Persons with ordinary eyesight require no glass in wood-cutting.

The work may be best executed with a strong steady northern light. In cutting by lamplight, a shade should be employed, to throw the light down, and the light may be concentrated by being made to shine through a globe of water, the light coming to a focus on the block.

The engraving is done at a table or bench of convenient height, placed below or near the light just mentioned. The engraver, seated on a chair, holds and moves about the block on the pad with the left hand, while he operates with the tool in the right, as is represented in the annexed cut. Great steadiness of hand is of the utmost importance, for the least cut in a wrong direction may mar, if not ruin, the effect to be produced. Until the learner becomes familiar with his tools, he should proceed gently and patiently, pushing the graver cautiously forward at a uniform depth, and clearing out small chips or thread-like parings.

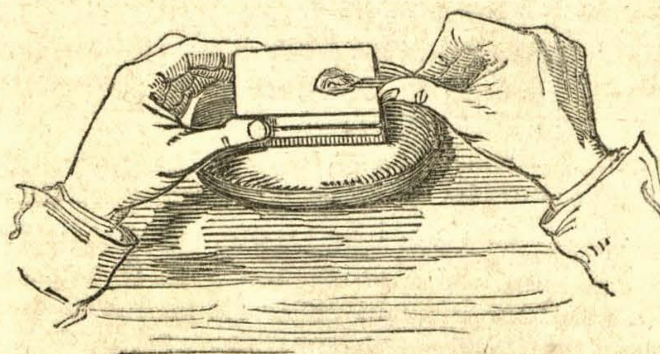


Fig. 1.

In picture-painting, innumerable tones, tints, lights, shades, nearness, and distance, are produced by applying a variety of colours, and any error can be rectified by a new touch of the brush. In wood-engraving, every kind of effect must be produced by a mere variation in the marking, first with the pencil, and afterwards with the graver; the result in printing being a variety of dark marks and lines on a white ground. The skill of the wood-engraver is therefore tested to no mean degree. On the careful and judicious disposition of his lines, and the lightness and strength of his masses of darkened parts, depend the entire effect of his labours.

In executing a wood-cut, the parts drawn upon remain, and the blank spaces which the pencil has not touched are cleared away.

The first lessons of a learner should consist in engraving straight parallel lines with a tinting tool; as is exemplified in fig. 2. The degree of darkness is regulated by the thickness of the lines, and the spaces cut out between them.

Fig. 2.

Let the lines be cut smooth and clean, free of ruggedness or breaks.

Not till pretty well grounded in the art of cutting straight parallel lines, should the learner proceed to the next steps in advance, which will consist in cutting bent and waving lines. Figs. 3, 4, and 5, show the nature of this progression.

Fig. 3.

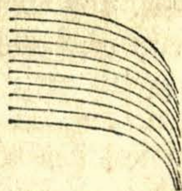


Fig. 4.

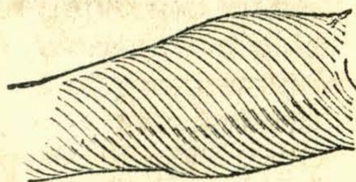


Fig. 5.

Having cut one or more of these early exercises, the parts of the block not to be printed must be lowered with a flat or gouging tool, so as to leave no parts so high as the lines.

Perfected in the art of cutting lines straight, bent, and waved, the learner may proceed to cross-hatching, which consists in cutting lines at different angles, and of different lengths, across other lines, with the view of expressing graduated depths of shade. The varieties of hatching are endless, from light tones, up to the darkest shadows. Fig. 6 represents a familiar kind of cross-hatching.

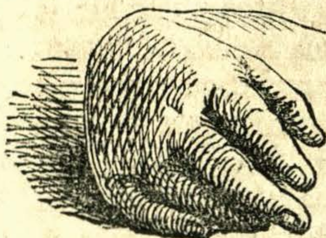


Fig. 6.

These specimens are given, more for the purpose of showing what cross-hatching is, than of inducing learners to prosecute this kind of engraving. Cross-hatching should always be sparingly employed, and in no case when an effect can be attained by simple lines; for it introduces complexity, and often too much minuteness of detail. "A good engraving," as Jackson observes, "viewed as a *work of art*, is *not* good in proportion, as many of its parts have the appearance of fine lace."

With this caution, it should be mentioned, that if cross-hatching is found indispensable, the learner will require to execute it with particular care; for there is a difficulty in cutting out the whites, so as to leave continuous lines sweeping across, as in the above figure. If possible, rest the tool on the whites afterwards to be cut away; and when nothing remains as a fulcrum, a small piece of card may be laid on the block as a protective. Take care also not to undermine any already cut lines; for if undercut, they may break off in printing.

Apparent faults in wood-engravings can with great difficulty be remedied; and it is better for them to remain, or to execute another engraving, than to attempt improvement. Experienced engravers are sometimes able to correct errors in their cuts by what is technically called plugging. A small piece of wood is

dexterously drilled out of the block, and a new piece is inserted in its stead, and glued, to prevent shifting. On this new piece the correction is executed.

### TAKING PROOFS.

When an engraving is finished, the workman will be gratified by seeing how it looks on paper, and this gratification he can afford himself, without the aid of the printing press. The materials necessary for this operation are, as already stated, a small quantity of the finest printing ink; a smooth stone or slab to distribute it on (the back of a large strong earthenware saucer will, however, answer the purpose); a "dabber," composed of wool, tightly tied up in white leather or fine silk; some India or Chinese paper; a burnisher; and a piece of card. Having smeared a small quantity of ink on the dabber, beat it for some time on the stone, that it may be distributed equally over the surface. Holding the cut steadily on the sand-bag, strike it gently with the dabber, taking care not to use any pressure whatever; the ink will thus be imparted evenly upon the *surface* of the lines, without descending to their sides. Having cut a piece of India paper to the required size, breathe upon its smoothest side, lay it on the block, place the card on the back of the paper, and commence rubbing the back of the card with the burnisher. A very steady hand is requisite to do this effectually, for if the India paper be allowed to move, the lines will be blurred or doubled. When every part of the object on the block has been sufficiently rubbed, the operation is finished, and the proof may be removed.

A precaution may be necessary in taking proofs by the above plan, which is, to leave a border of the whites standing round the edge of the block, as something for the hand and the burnisher to bear upon. To prevent the black mass (which will of course be inked with the rest) from appearing on the finished proof, a rough one must be taken first, and the subject of the engraving cut out of it with scissors. After inking the block for the clean proof, the black border must be covered with what is left of the first impression, which protects the former from the ink during the burnishing process. Of course the border on the block must be cut away in finishing the wood-cut for press.

After using, the slab should be cleaned with ley of potashes, or turpentine, and the dabber must be kept clean and soft. If these precautions are not attended to, the proofs will soon become coarse in appearance, and the cuts will be clogged. The most perfect dabber is the ball of the hand; but few will choose to soil their hands with printers' ink. Cuts are best cleaned with turpentine, and they should be dried before being put aside.

## OUTLINE FIGURES.

In commencing to cut figures and scenes, it is advisable to copy from wood-engravings of a simple and expressive kind. Almost all beginners commit a serious mistake in attempting to imitate the finer class of wood-engravings, which abound in minute marking. They should learn to bring out an effect in light and shade *with as few lines and hatchings as possible*, never making two or more small marks where one of a bolder stretch would answer. The first figures attempted should only be in outline, as is exemplified in the annexed engraving of the leaves of a plant.

Fig. 7.

Here it will be observed what effect is produced by a few thin and thick lines, with a very slight shading.

Outline figures, such as that at the head of the present sheet,

Fig. 8.

or that of the statue of James Watt, in fig. 8, may also at this stage of advancement be engraved; after which figures with

shading, or small groups of rural objects, as in fig. 9, may be executed.

Fig. 9.

Another class of exercises consists in cutting sketches of round and oval objects, in which there are strong depths of shadow and strong lights, as in fig. 10.

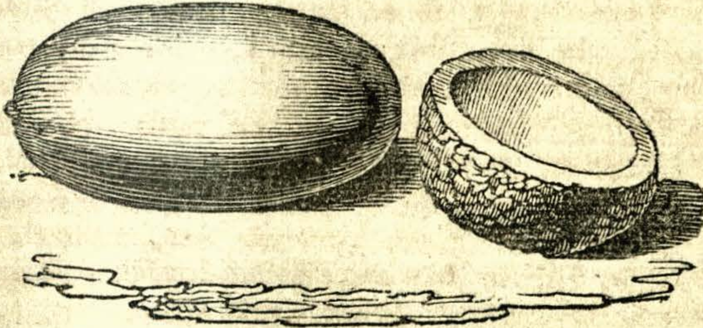


Fig. 10.

It will be observed in these examples, as well as in other cuts of a simple class, that three gradations of shade require to be studied. After the pure white comes the lightest shading, consisting of only a few scratches. Next we have the gray or middle tone. Lastly we have this mid tone shading down to the pure black. Pure blacks are portions of wood scarcely, if at all, touched by the graver.

Fig. 11.

About this stage of advancement the learner may exercise

himself in drawing and cutting foliage of different kinds. As is well known to the draughtsman, foliage is represented differently, according to the nature of the tree. In fig. 11, in the preceding page, the willow is represented by perpendicular markings, terminating in a point, to give the idea of its pendant foliage. A broad mass of light is usually preserved, and an increase of markings is given to one side of each subdivision of foliage, with considerable power of characteristic markings on the shade-side of the tree, besides an occasional repetition of touch for effect.

The fir has been represented by short angular markings connected with each other, much like the zig-zag scratch with a pen to obliterate an incorrect word. These markings are continued in agreement with the projections of the branches, are repeated with increased power on the shade-side of the tree, and a few slight markings are given on the extremities, and beneath the masses, to indicate foliage on the farther side of the tree. The elm has been represented by escalops in a semicircular direction, so distributed as to give the idea of thick foliage.

The oak has been represented, as in fig. 12, by a character which partakes of angular and broken circular markings, intermingled with dots and sharp touches. The lighter parts are pencilled tenderly, and the shade portions are repeated upon, with additional power given by sharp angular markings.

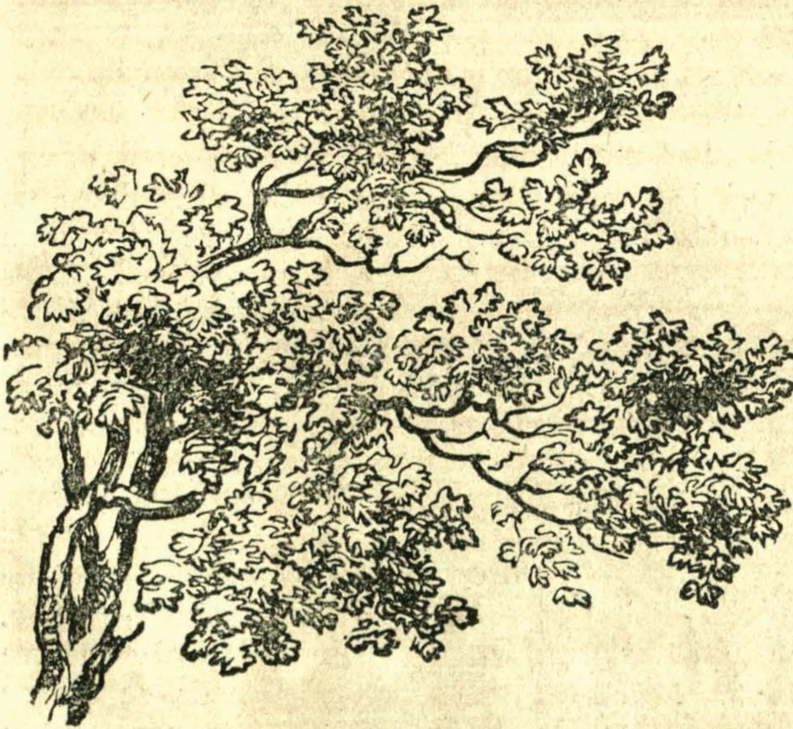


Fig. 12.

We mention these varieties for the purpose of showing that foliage is not to be represented by distinctly portraying every leaf, but by a bold grouping and superficial outlining; the purpose being served by merely a general representation. Suppose a tree is to be selected for placing in the foreground of a drawing, where its peculiarities are required to be displayed. Let the growth of the branches be observed; a straight line is rarely to be seen, nor do they spring from each other with uniformity;

there is usually an undulating line, often graceful, or a wild luxuriance, ever pleasing, in these supports to the foliage. Let the effect of the leaves which may compose a principal mass be indicated, not the outline of a leaf or leaves, which would prove labour in vain, but what is seen as much by the imagination as the eye; that is, not the detail, but the effect. If too much regularity appear, destroy it by projecting a touch or two on the extremities, and attack any formality by additional markings, in conformity with the character adopted. Oftentimes the mere waving of the pencil, or a powerful repetition with the broad point, will not only remove a monotonous appearance, but communicate characteristic spirit and effect.

## ADVANCED EXERCISES.

After outlined and shaded figures, the learner may proceed to figures with shadings and backgrounds, requiring a variety of light and dark lines. In beginning figures or objects with backgrounds, it is necessary to cut an outline round it, as a boundary to other lines coming against it; but this outline should not be seen in the impression of the engraving. This outlining prevents the figure from appearing to adhere to the background, and is indispensable.

In this department of study the learner may engrave human figures, animals of different kinds, and rural and street scenes with skies; as, for example, small copies like that of Paul preaching at Athens, fig. 13; in this, however, as in many other things, much must be left to the taste, the patience, and the skill of the engraver. Beyond this it is unnecessary to offer any hints in this small and rudimentary tract. Those who wish to pursue the profession of wood-engraving, will find it advantageous to consult the elegant and elaborate treatise of Mr Jackson on the art, illustrated with three hundred engravings. (Charles Knight, London. 1839.)

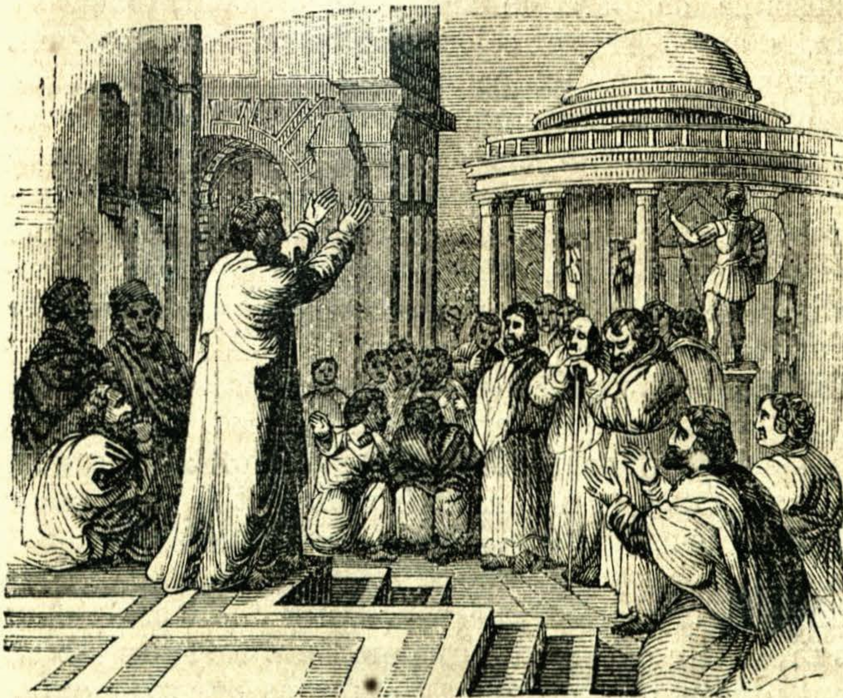


Fig. 13.

## WOOD-ENGRAVING AS A PROFESSION.

Wood-engraving is carried on as a profession chiefly in London, where there are some extensive establishments devoted to this line of business. In these, as in all other large concerns, it is not unusual to have a division of labour; a cut being made to go through several hands, from the drawing to the finishing. By such means cuts can be produced with surprising rapidity; but it may be doubted if this wholesale system of production is advantageous to art. The too-common failing of wood-cuts is their want of character and truth. They may be neat, elegant, and highly finished, but not striking for their fidelity, and too ambitiously imitative of steel or copper-plate engravings. Wood-cuts should possess a character of their own, which cannot be mistaken; and to attain this character for their productions, ought to be the aim of every artist.

Another, and perhaps more serious fault of many wood-cuts, is their not being adapted to the kind of printing for which they are intended. There are now two kinds of letterpress printing, very different from each other—printing by flat pressure with the hand-press, and printing with cylinder machines, moved by steam power. At the hand-press, cuts can be worked off with the greatest possible deliberation and care; and if inked by means of soft balls, any degree of colour can be imparted to them. At the printing machine no such pains can be taken: a common or easily-working ink must be employed; the rollers run over the forms with uncompromising speed; and the cylinders, turning out ten or eleven sheets per minute, give a depth of impression which is fatal to delicacy of lines. Now, the misfortune is, that wood-engravers do not sufficiently study these distinctions. In sending home their cuts to their employers, they give along with them proofs on India paper, which look exceedingly beautiful; and if the cuts were to be printed on India paper with fine ink, the work would be quite answerable. Such, however, is not the case. Perhaps as many as nine-tenths of all the cuts executed are for machine printing, with which it is impossible to do them on all occasions justice. Hence the many blurred and ineffective cuts which are seen in books, all the tones being confounded, and often only a gray haze pervading the work. Not that these cuts are badly executed, but that they are suited to an entirely different process of working. So far as our own experience goes as publishers, this appears, in the present posture of affairs, to be an almost incurable evil. Unless when the drawings were effected by Mr Franklin, or when both drawing and cutting were executed on our own premises, we have rarely been able to procure wood-cuts, no matter at what expense, exactly adapted

to a necessity of our condition—the printing of long impressions by cylinder machines.*

We mention these circumstances with the view of doing all in our power to inspire amateur learners with a correct idea of the deficiencies as well as the excellencies of wood-engraving in its present state of advancement. We wish to show them not only what they should attain, but what they ought in prudence to avoid. Already it has been stated that, without a knowledge of drawing, all attempts to prosecute wood-engraving successfully must prove fruitless. Let us repeat and impress this fact on the mind of every one who thinks of taking a graver in hand. Let all who are deficient in this qualification procure instruction; and we know of no better seminaries than the schools of design now generally established throughout the country. Learn, we say, to sketch with fidelity from nature, to copy from prints and paintings, to acquire taste in grouping, and disposition of light and shade, and to design subjects in illustration of passages in stories, &c. Having acquired a certain proficiency in these departments, which involve much miscellaneous knowledge, the amateur may proceed to wood-cutting, *but not till then.*

The surmounting of so many preliminary impediments will no doubt require time and trouble, but no attainment of any value can be acquired without industry and patience. The attainment in the present instance is worthy of more than the usual degree of labour. It is the acquiring of an art which may be turned to most important uses. To those in easy circumstances, it may be a delightful and elegant exercise. To others less fortunate in worldly condition, it may become a ready means of subsistence. There are few things on which human labour raises the value so highly as wood-engravings. A small piece of wood, worth no more than two or three shillings, may, by a few days of skilful industry, become worth as many pounds. Surely, to be able to impart this high value to an object next to worthless in its raw state, must be deemed no mean talent.

The ease with which wood-engraving can be executed within the domestic circle, peculiarly adapts it as an occupation for ladies. On this point we cannot do better than offer the following passages from an article on wood-engraving in the London and Westminster Review for 1838:—

"To that large portion of educated gentlewomen of the middle classes who now earn a subsistence chiefly as governesses, we wish to point out this art as an honourable, elegant, and lucrative employment, easily acquired, and everywhere becoming their sex and habits. We have already done honour to the exquisite deli-

* It is but justice to mention, that the greater number of our wood-cuts have latterly been the production of Mr John Adam, a rising and almost self-taught artist, a native of Arbroath, who has been several years in our employment.

cacy and elegance of the engravings of Mary Ann Williams; we venture to say that few women of taste, whatever their rank in life, can look on 'Le Jardin du Paria au lever de l'Aurore' without envying the artist her power of producing a scene so beautiful, and of exciting in thousands the pleasing emotions inseparable from it. Apart from all pecuniary considerations, to be able to do it is an elegant accomplishment; and the study of the principles and details of taste which it implies, is a cultivating and refining process to every mind. All that can be taught of the art may be learned in a few lessons, and thus an acquirement made which will afford no slight protection against misfortunes to which, in this commercial country, even the richest are exposed —and a means of livelihood obtained which, without severing from home, without breaking up family assemblies, is at once more happy, healthy, tasteful, and profitable, than almost any other of the pursuits at present practised by women. The lady we have named is not alone in the practice of this art: we might name also Eliza Thomson, and Mary and Elizabeth Clint, who have furnished excellent engravings for the 'Paule et Virginie;' and we have heard of several daughters of professional and mercantile men, not likely to be dependent on their own exertions for support, who have wisely, by learning this art, acquired both an accomplishment and a profession. The occupations, we may also add, are few indeed to which gentlewomen of this class can more worthily devote themselves, than to an art which is peculiarly fitted to enhance the enjoyments and refinements of the people, by scattering through all the homes of the land the most beautiful delineations of scenery, of historic incidents, and of distinguished persons."

In consequence, we believe, of these recommendations, many females have turned their attention to wood-engraving, and in 1841–2 there were produced two small volumes, "A Handbook for Hampton Court," and "A Handbook for Westminster Abbey," wholly illustrated by lady-professors of this delicate art.