

Here we saw two little black pigs, eagerly devouring a supper of potato parings, and such scraps boiled in buttermilk which Rachel had just brought them. In the orchard the pretty cows were tethered, both lying down, and chewing the cud of contentment, and beyond, in the paddock, the grass was waving ready for the scythe.

When I congratulated my friend on her charming little establishment, she smiled and said, "My friends wasted a good deal of pity on me when I chose this line of life. My dear father died after a succession of bad

seasons, so that, instead of being a bit of an heiress, as everyone expected, I found it best to take this little place. But I had always lived an active, out-of-door life, and am far happier than I could have been playing the fine lady in a town. I have a little property laid by for a rainy day or for old age, and I believe nothing but death will part Rachel and me. I can truly say that my lines have fallen in pleasant places, and that my heritage of health and capacity for this simple country life is a goodly one; and I have always a little to spare to help my poorer neighbours,

who are apt to come to me in sickness or trouble."

This was by no means my last interview with my new friend, and the more I saw of Miss Pyne the more I honoured her. In spite of homely tasks and retail trade dealings she was a perfect lady, gentle, intelligent, and cultured. She believed in the dignity of labour, and carried out her theories; and although circumstances have led me far away from Norington, I hope I shall never forget the lessons learnt under the humble roof of Madam Rustica. MAUD MORRISON.

PYROGRAPHY; OR, POKER-WORK.

By B. C. SAWARD.



UNDER the many names given to the old-fashioned poker or burnt wood engraving the art still flourishes, and, as time goes on, instead of declining in the public estimation it, by the improvements introduced, not only retains

its hold on the working world but becomes, by new departures, more artistic and more useful.

The old original work done with red-hot irons flourished in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, England, Germany, and Italy during the centuries when heavy oaken chests, bureaux, and tables were in use, and some of this, in combination with fine wood carving, is still in existence. This decoration disappeared in Europe when furniture assumed less solid shapes, but in the rude half-civilised nations of South, West, and Central Africa it is still practised. With them drinking-bowls, hatchets, spoons, pillows, idols, state wands, and other wooden articles are profusely decorated with incised lines deeply burnt in and sometimes embellished with colouring matter; but in them, as in European specimens, no attempt has been made to give the effects of shade or tone by working from light to dark, a hard decided line of various widths upon a clean surface or upon a black background being all that is aimed at.

Pyrography, we are glad to be able to write, owes its impetus to an English firm, who during the last few years have vastly improved upon the German revival of the art. The specimens sent from that country for imitation were only suitable for fine landscape etching, or for large panels round a frieze. The machine cost 25s., and the wood procurable was not of the kind used for the originals. By producing an apparatus that could be bought at a reasonable rate, inventing many different-shaped tools for working with, employing artists to design patterns that could be adapted to small articles, and making a variety of wooden articles with close-grained and seasoned wood, Messrs. Abbott has supplied a want felt by all who are interested in the art. Not content with developing the work upon wood, the same firm has applied it to leather, to plain glass, and to ground glass.

Although most of our readers know that

the work is no longer done with hot irons or hot poker, few of them appreciate the delicacy of the machine that supplies their place. Surgeons will understand its working, as a somewhat similar instrument is used for cautery. The apparatus is a bottle half-filled with benzoline, through whose cork two tubes are passed. These tubes are fastened into india-rubber tubing, one ending in the holder of the platinum point that burns the wood, and the other in a small air-pump made of two hollow balls of rubber, connected together with a piece of tubing. The machine acts as follows:—The platinum point is hollow; it is heated in a spirit-lamp and held in the right hand. The lowest ball of the air-pump is held in the left hand, and pressed in and expanded by the finger and thumb of that hand. The air thus forced into the second ball runs along the tubing into the bottle, passes as a vapour over the benzoline, and takes up some of that spirit. It then runs through the tubing that is in connection with the platinum point and keeps that point in a perpetual glow; in fact, the point can be kept red-hot for hours without any relighting, as long as the left-hand thumb and finger gently press in and allow to expand the lowest ball. A beginner naturally thinks that this action of the left hand is a nuisance, but after a little practice it becomes quite mechanical; and though anyone can help by relieving the artist of this work, it should never be delegated to another at critical moments, as good work often requires the blowing to be either very slow or with a sudden burst of heat, and this variety can only be done by the worker. No violent action is at any time needed; a slight even pressure for general work, with a little quickening or stopping when certain effects are to be brought out.

Platinum, being the hardest of all metals, does not waste to any great degree when subject to heat and brought in contact with wood, leather, or glass, but it will amalgamate with lead or zinc, and must not be tried on these metals. The handle of the point is made of wood or cork, and so arranged that the point will unscrew and allow of another shaped point replacing it. Thus to the same handle can be attached a fine point for landscape etching, a very broad point for glass work and for deeply incised lines and other coarse work, or a curved point for burning down plain backgrounds, or a "pattern point."

It is not necessary to buy all these points, as they are the expensive part of the apparatus, and most workers can and do make one point answer every requirement by simply holding it in different ways—flat, when working at backgrounds, as a drawing-pencil when shading or making fine lines, and quite perpendicular when deeply burning down any particular

parts, such as the centres of flowers, the eyes of animals, and conventional designs. With the aid of the pattern points—which are shaped as rounds, triangles, diamonds, hearts, ovals, trefoils, and crescents—the backgrounds of subjects are made into diaper patterns and large conventional designs, as shown in Fig. 1, relieved from any flat appearance. For borderings they are also useful, and they allow the worker to exercise individual taste, as by combining them together, or by simply using one of them at different angles, a great variety of work is obtained. They are made in platinum and in copper, the latter being the cheaper, and good enough when not much work is required.

There is one thing that must be remembered before undertaking this art, and that is, that no good work can be expected when common or very hard wood is used as a foundation. It is this rage for cheap wooden tables and other common deal articles that has spoilt not only decorative painting upon wood, but delicate work with a platinum point. The common fresh deal that oozes out turpentine and gives forth a most pungent smoke when worked on will never allow of any fine lines, half-tones, or artistic handling; it will burn a strong black and nothing more. Again with elm or oak; these woods, however good in quality, are much too hard for anything but strong deep lines. The best woods are holly, sycamore, lime, Kaurie pine, birch, chestnut, aspen, poplar, tulip, pear, and yew. Some of these woods do not grow large enough for panelling, but they can always be carefully joined; and no one who has once tried their surfaces and seen what delicate effects of light and shade are obtainable from them will ever grudge the small extra expense their use involves. The solid strong glove and handkerchief boxes, the blotters, photo frames, tea chests, and numerous other articles now procurable at good shops are made of the right sort of wood, while table-tops, door panels, and other particular articles can always be ordered. The wood used must be free from knots and half an inch in thickness, as very thin wood will warp from the intense heat of the instrument. Knots in the wood will spoil any fine effects, not only by reason of the unsightliness of the knot, but because the circles of wood round it are much harder in grain than the rest of the surface. Good artists are so impressed with the desirability of using well-seasoned wood that they keep it by them for a long period, but ordinary people are content to buy articles that are well and closely made.

In the list of the woods above given as fit for pyrography, we would point out that beech, cedar, and yew are red woods, and make very good backgrounds for classical figures, animals, and other large designs.

They also take firing well, and allow of a great deal of variety in the shading and lines drawn on them of great fineness and depth. Holly, willow, lime, and sycamore are close-grained white woods, and almost anything can be done with them, such as the finest lines—shading that looks like stippling, softly-smoked surfaces, and great depth of colour. What is known as Kaurie pine is another excellent wood. All these woods during the progress of the work emit a certain amount of smoke, but fortunately this wood smoke is not injurious to the eyesight, and, though pungent, is not disagreeable. Common deal is the worst to endure, but from the hard woods the smoke is sweet-scented and but little of it. The worker can always avoid coming in contact with it by placing the wood on an easel and standing or sitting a little away; it is the worker who uses bad fresh wood and stoops

over the flat surface that finds the smoke inconvenient. Many artists find the smoke useful in throwing a slight tint over parts of the wood they leave untouched, and they contrive to arrange their panels while working at them so as to make the smoke fall upon such parts.

Another way of obtaining a scorched but soft surface (on which afterwards to etch in bold lines) is to hold the platinum point in such a manner that the small escape hole in it near the tip is close to the wood; through this a rush of warm air will fall upon the surface and tone it. Many workers keep the platinum points that have become perforated through hard wear by them, and when they want smoked or scorched surfaces they screw them on and allow the smoke, etc., to pour through the worn holes on to the wood.

In landscape work, figure, portrait, and animal etching the artist should look upon the

platinum point as if it were an etching needle, and make with it fine shadings, deep-incised lines, clear delineations of light and shade, and artistic effects. The whole world of drawing in black and white is opened to all with the aid of this little needle point, if it is only taken seriously and time spent in learning how to use it. Many people think that after they have bought a machine nothing more is expected of them; its use comes by nature, and time is thrown away in learning how to shade or draw with it. To these people we recommend the flower and easy conventional designs that require no knowledge of any art but that of keeping the point red hot; but all who desire to rank as artists must put their wills and minds into the work.

With regard to the designs used there are many good outline patterns published by art papers that can be adapted to fill up spaces. *The Art Amateur* and *Home Art Work* and Messrs. Abbott publish full-sized tracings or large designs suitable for carving or brass or poker work, and for more finished designs, the etchings of old masters, the beautiful modern etchings of old buildings and foreign streets produced in shades of brown, and giving exactly the colouring and depth necessary, are perfect copies. In Fig. 1 a modern conventional design for the door of a corner cupboard is shown, worked up and shaded with the aid of a broad platinum point and three pattern points—the diamond, oval, and trefoil. This is a fair specimen of what can be done by an ordinary worker, and is managed as follows:—Trace the chief outlines of copy upon transparent paper, lay this on the wood with red carbonised paper underneath. With a finely-pointed pencil mark through the transparent paper on to the wood, being careful to keep to the pattern lines. A little stale bread can be used to rub out wrong markings, but it is better not to use it and not to trace through black or blue carbonised paper, as the lines they leave upon the wood are difficult to get out.

Having traced the lines, heat the machine and work in the broad lines with the platinum point, but not the dragons. Hold the point as a pencil and work, or rather stipple, in the background to the dragons, leaving their outlines white. This background requires very minute shading, deepened at parts by being gone over several times not by the blackness of those places being obtained at once. Touch in the wings with the broad point and the markings of the heads, and make the body scales by fastening on the oval "pattern point," heating it red hot and working with it. Unscrew it after it has cooled, and finish the bodies of the dragons with fine shading. Work with the broad point for the deep border round the design, burn this border very deep and black, also the centres to the shields. Mark in the background to the scrolls, etc., by holding the broad point as a pencil and shading with fine and light-crossed lines. Use the diamond pattern and the trefoil as finishes, placing the trefoils as an ornamental border round the dragons and making various designs with the diamonds. When using these pattern points, the spirit lamp that heats the platinum point should be kept alight, and the pattern point kept hot by being thrust into it. This help does not supersede the blowing with the air pump, but is additional, it being necessary to keep up a strong even heat. When the panel is quite finished, rub it over with a white opaque varnish obtained from the Artists' Guild. A very thin coating of this is used, and it is rubbed on with the finger; a thick coating spoils the surface. Having rubbed in the varnish, take some silver paper, make a ball of it, and rub it over the whole surface of the wood. Work pretty hard for a quarter of an hour, changing the paper as it becomes limp, and a soft shine will appear—not like



FIG. 1.

any shine given to wood by French or beeswax polish, but the shine to be seen upon ivory. This protects the wood and keeps the sharp tones of the burning from becoming dulled; it also softens down the parts left unburnt, and gives them the tone of old ivory. This varnish cannot be used for pictures or figures worked out as etchings, but it is recommended for conventional designs, for table-tops, door panels, photo frames, etc.

When working figure and landscape pictures upon wood, use the fine point and not the broad platinum point, and work upon beech, Kaurie pine, or any wood that has a soft-coloured tone; leave plenty of white surface, and imitate the perpendicular lines and cross-hatching of an etching, taking care to give roundness of outline, as in drawing, by placing the greatest dark near the greatest light, and by following out all the rules of drawing and perspective.

In working upon leather, outline and a little shading is all that can be managed. The skins are sold by leather shops, and can be cut to cover blotting-books, *Bradshaw* guides, glove and handkerchief cases, or any other small articles. This branch of the art is not so artistic as the others, but can be made very effective. The fine-pointed platinum instrument is used.

Pyrography upon glass is quite a new invention, and at first sight the idea that an instrument so red-hot as the point must be, can work upon glass without cracking the background seems impossible, but it is not so; and in Fig. 2 is illustrated a coat of arms done upon a sheet of plain glass, and in this the very finest straight lines and curved lines of great delicacy are made. When working upon glass the pattern (on ordinary paper) is laid under the sheet of glass, and no tracing is required. A broad point is generally used, and greater heat and greater pressure than is necessary when working upon wood or leather. To obtain a greater heat use the best benzoline to be had, and place a piece of cotton wool shaped like a pyramid in the bottle. Let part of this wool appear above the benzoline in the bottle. A much larger surface for evaporation is thus obtained, and greater vapour given off. Work the platinum point not as a drawing pencil, but nearly upright, and press heavily down on the glass from the

wrist. As the point works, a thin film of glass will peel away from the surface wherever it has been touched by the hot point. Sometimes this film will not peel off, but will remain on the lines in a loose state; a penknife is then used to pick off these detached pieces. Armorial bearings to insert into window panes, photo frames ornamented with engraved glass flowers, glass paper weights, tumblers, finger glasses, and wine glasses are all subjects suitable for this decoration. When working on them in cold weather, warm the glass before applying the instrument.

Fig. 3 is a design to be used for ground glass for hall windows, or in any window where light is to be let in and objects excluded. The pane of glass to be decorated must be laid flat, the design placed underneath it; the broadest point and firm pressure are required. The lines as burnt in and the film of glass removed come out as clear glass. The few lines of shading shown greatly improve the pattern, and are easily executed by a steady hand. No stippling or cross-shading is necessary, and the work is highly effective.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.