

THE HISTORY OF WOOD-ENGRAVING.*

THE wood-engravers are exercised with the theory of their art. They have been discussing its ends and methods with a view to justify some particular mode of work, and the usual misfortune of debate among experts has befallen them: they have not altogether freed their words from gall. Were the heat of the quarrel much greater, the public might still condone the fault, since the stake is the future of that art which now gives most promise of value as practiced in America. Wood-engraving has been from its birth the people's art in an eminent degree. At present the ease and cheapness of its processes, the variety of its applications, and its widespread use in scientific and artistic illustration make it one of the most accessible sources of inexpensive pleasure, and a most powerful instrument of popular education. It imparts a large share of the visual knowledge which the people have of the thing they have not directly seen; it portrays the humors of the day; it assists the imagination, and it sometimes generates in the better-endowed minds a real sympathy with the higher products of art. In a nation where a reading middle class is the larger element, this popular influence has a reach and penetration which make wood-engraving a living art in a sense which none other of the fine arts can claim; but this was not the main ground of my saying that it is the art which now gives most promise of value as practiced in America. Bad art may be popular; it usually is. A large demand and corresponding supply do not insure good engraving. The promise of value lies in the fact that there are signs of the appearance among the people of a critical spirit concerning it, the beginning of a public taste, not, perhaps, to be called intelligent as yet, but forming, nascent, feeling its way into conscious and active life, and again in the fact that wood-engravers are sincerely ambitious of excellence, and have made marked progress within the last ten years. The present interest in the theoretic aims of the art and its legitimate practical methods is a fresh and striking indication of its vitality, and may turn out to be a very noteworthy fact in the artistic life of the republic. At the least the discussion can hardly fail of some

valuable result in doing something to clear up the too evident confusion in the minds of wood-engravers with respect to the nature and scope of their art, in informing those younger artists who can still be influenced through their intelligence to modify their habits of work, and in teaching the public what in wood-engraving is really admirable.

In this controversy I do not intend to take part, except incidentally; but before entering upon that rapid outline of the history of wood-engraving which is my main concern, some preliminary remarks must be made on a matter touching which I have said the minds of wood-engravers seem to be confused—the nature and scope of the art. What, then, is wood-engraving? Every one knows that it is the art of cutting upon blocks of wood a design in relief, so that the raised parts when inked will transfer the design to paper. The engraver hollows out all the spaces between the parts which are to appear black in the finished engraving, and these parts are left raised, like type; an impression is then taken just as in ordinary printing, by means of a press, or by rubbing the back of the paper with a flat instrument, and so pressing it down upon the block. This mechanical nature of wood-engraving—the materials and the way of dealing with them—is the key to the legitimate ends of the art; for it limits the results which can be obtained, and marks out a specific province. All the graphic arts have to do with some one or more of the three modes under which nature is revealed to the artist—the mode of pure form, the mode of pure color, the mode of form and color as they are affected by the different lights and shadows in which they exist. A fruit has form and color, and the bloom of a peach is one beauty in sun and another beauty in shade. With color, there is no need to say, wood-engraving has nothing to do; neither has it anything to do with the play of light, or the more marvellously transforming touch of shadow. That change of the peach's bloom is beyond its skill; more broadly, a landscape shot with the evanescent shadows that hover in rapidly moving mists, or the intermingling light and gloom of a wind-swept moon-lit sky half overcast with clouds, it has no power to seize and hold. The most it can do in this direction is to indicate strong

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contrasts of light and shadow, and symbolize varying intensity of hue, by the greater or less depth of its blacks and grays. True color and true chiar-oscuro it relinquishes to painting. Form, therefore, is left as the main object of the wood-engraver's craft; and the representation of form is effected by delineation, drawing, line-work. Here is the much-debated ground; for there are some who assert that there are good wood-engravings with very little line-work, and that these open the way to new progress. They are representations of charcoal drawings, washed sketches, and similar works, which have little to do with line, but depend for their effect upon other resources. Whatever may be the value of these, with their obscure masses meant for trees, in which you may look with a microscope and fail to find leaf, limb, or bark; their mottled grounds meant for grass or houses, in which there is neither blade nor fibre; their blocks of formless tints, in which all the veracity of the landscape perishes—they may be left on one side. Those who look on engraving as an art of expression, as a means of recording natural facts or conveying thought or sentiment, will take no delight in the new style, because of its simple vacuity; but they need not quarrel with those who look to wood-engraving for ineffective copies indistinctly indicating the general effect of originals in other arts with which it has no affinity. At least, they need not quarrel further than to say that in such work wood-engraving abdicates its own peculiar power of expressing nature in a true, accurate, and beautiful way, and descends to mechanical imitation.

Line-work is the main business of the engraver, because he has to represent form, and form is represented by lines. All lines, however, are not equally proper for wood-engraving; some are better adapted to engraving on copper-plate. This latter process, which must be understood before the provinces of the two closely allied arts can be easily discriminated, is exactly the reverse of engraving on wood. The lines of the design, instead of being left raised by cutting away the intervening spaces, are hollowed out or grooved in the metal; the incisions are then filled with ink, the intervening surfaces are wiped clean, and the print is taken off by rubbing or pressing the paper down into the inked hollows or grooves. Owing to the material and

the mode of printing, copper-plate engraving obtains with little difficulty a fineness of line, delicacy of contour, and softness in transition of light and shade rarely and with difficulty attainable by the best-skilled hand and eye among wood-engravers. A fine line in wood is not only hard to execute, but is extremely liable to fracture, owing to the fragility of wood; on the other hand, a broad line on copper, which necessarily holds a broad channel of ink, is difficult to print. Again, copper-plate engraving, by an easy convention, suggests color values—*i. e.*, imitates variations in the hues of objects by variations in the depth of blackness with which different portions of the design are printed—an effect which is obtained by means of lines crossing one another at different intervals and at different angles, but usually obliquely; the depth of color depends, of course, on the relative fineness and closeness of the lines. To the wood-engraver, this cross-hatching, as it is called, is a more difficult task, because while the engraver on copper has only to cut lines crosswise by grooving them into the plate, the wood-engraver, who must leave these lines raised, is forced to gouge out separately the minute diamond spaces between the crossing lines. Yet wood-engraving has often adopted the methods of copper-plate, and attempted to rival it in the character of its lines, and has sometimes succeeded by dint of a great expenditure of care and labor. Any theory of art, however, which requires the waste of human labor is a wrong theory. In the mechanic arts an economical division of labor is maintained by constantly operating causes. In the fine arts these causes are not felt, and the sense of the value of human effort and the folly of its waste is not sufficiently established in the community to serve as a check on misguided ambition. What is gained by an engraver who cuts in wood with patient and wearying skill a design which could have been engraved on copper far more readily? He excites wonder that he should have obtained such results with such tools, his work is hailed as a marvellous *tour de force*, but the work has no greater artistic value on that account. Wood-engravers have frequently seemed to forget the cardinal fact that their own art has original and peculiar powers; that if it fails of the delicacy of line and softness of contour that belong to copper-plate, it excels in boldness and force of line and strongly

contrasted lights and shadows well-nigh impossible in the kindred art; that it is of a value and deserves a respect which warrant it in retaining its own marked individuality, instead of wandering off into imitation of copper-engraving, charcoal-sketching, crayon-work, or anything of the sort. An incomplete realization of the essential worth and peculiar serviceableness of their art lies at the root of the current errors in the modern practice of wood-engravers, to some of whom, nevertheless, the conclusion to which our brief inquiry is verging will doubtless seem meagre and unfruitful; for, to sum up, the special province of wood-engraving appears to be, representation by means of lines broad rather than fine, and bold rather than soft, arranged with the least expenditure of labor compatible with correct and expressive delineation. But the practice of the great masters of the art plainly enforces the validity of these principles, which have been grouped together both for the sake of condensation, and to render more easily apprehensible the course of the historic development of the art, too easily lost sight of in a necessarily somewhat discursive narrative.

The beginning of the art is lost in conjecture. It may be made out the oldest of all the arts, as the much distrusted Papillon shows by tracing its origin to the moment when man first employed a tool on wood. Some historians go back to the time when the Egyptians and Babylonians began to cut characters on wooden stamps with which they impressed soft substances, such as wax or clay—a practice which afterward spread throughout the ancient world. Others, again, with a stricter definition of the art, close their researches at the earliest application of such stamps to printing in colors on those valuable Indian stuffs well known to Roman luxury, and date the beginning of the art in Europe from the use of similar stamps in the Middle Ages to affix signatures to public documents; nor is it unlikely that the hint which directly suggested the process of printing from engraved wood blocks came from this practice of the notaries, or from those later illuminators of manuscripts who occasionally struck the outlines of their initial letters in this way. These mechanical appliances, although they successively led up to and at last resulted in wood-engraving, can not properly be included under it; the art did not really ex-

ist until the inventor laid his paper down upon the block and took off the first rude print. Who this inventor was, when and where he worked, are questions which lead into a double obscurity of ignorance and fable, where national vanities and national jealousies jostle in a bitter dispute, which now, after more than a century of controversy, seems as far from settlement as ever. There is Pliny, with his account of Varro, indicating a momentary, isolated, and premature appearance of the art in his day. There is Ottley, who would have us believe that the art found its way into Europe through the Venetians, who learned it "at a very early period of their intercourse with the people of Tartary, Thibet, and China." There is Papillon, once more, who relates how the earliest wood-cuts were made by "two young and amiable twins," Isabella and Alexander Albeni Cunio, of Ravenna, who, in their seventeenth year, executed eight designs illustrative of the deeds of Alexander the Great, and dedicated them in 1284-5 to Pope Honorius IV.; his tale, with its romantic sequel, many believe to be the hallucination of an insane mind. Meerman, the stout defender of the claims of Lawrence Coster to the invention of printing by movable types, makes him also the first printer of wood-cuts; but despite the well-developed genealogical tree which the learned Dutchman provided for his hero, and despite the alleged discovery of his portrait by Mr. Sotheby, his very existence is doubted, and the charming scene in which the idea of the new invention first occurred to Coster, as he was walking after dinner in his garden, and cutting letters from beech-tree bark with which to print moral sentences for his grandchildren—the good dinner, the well-ordered Haarlem garden, the beech-tree, the old man, and the childish group—is perhaps only the baseless creation of an antiquarian's fancy. With it vanishes, too, that striking rhetorical contrast of Motley's between the citizen printer of Haarlem working at the practical problems of his great invention, and his liege lord Duke Philip of Burgundy at the same moment instituting at Bruges the glorious order of the Knights of the Golden Fleece. Upon such facts and fables the learned and patriotic authors of the Low Countries, Germany, and Italy, aided by contentious foreigners, have expended much patient research without result. All that is clearly known is that in the first quarter of the

fifteenth century wood-cuts became plentiful in the civilized countries of Europe, and that their manufacture flourished more in the North than in the South.

known figures of saints, and the weight of authority favors the priority of the latter.

These were representations of various religious scenes in Scriptural or traditional



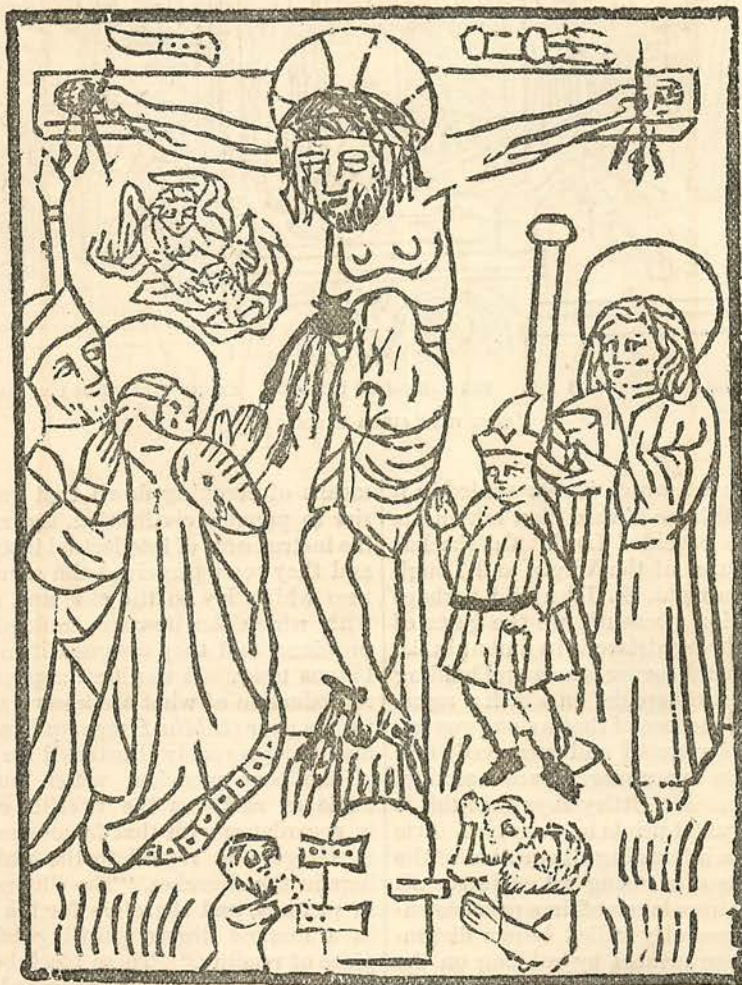
ST. CHRISTOPHER.—[FOUND IN THE CONVENT OF BUXHEIM, SUABIA.]

I have said that wood-engraving was from its birth the people's art in an eminent degree. Its first gifts were of diverse character, for it brought that great popular amusement of modern times the playing-card, and with it more holy prints—figures of the saints—to touch the conscience and arouse religious feeling. The earliest unquestioned mention of playing-cards in Europe occurs in 1392; but if they were not in general use before that year, they spread with enormous rapidity. This new and sudden demand may have led to a search for more speedy means of manufacture, and so to the first application of wood-engraving. There is no card, however, known to have been printed from a wood block of an earlier date than the first

history, and were scattered by the monks broadcast among the people. In Flanders, it is said, on days of festival, the monks, walking in procession, distributed brilliantly colored wood-cuts of holy subjects to the children in the streets. Numerous as they were in their day, only a few scattered examples have survived. The most famous of these is the St. Christopher which Heineken found pasted inside the cover of a manuscript in the convent of Buxheim, in Suabia. It is dated 1423, and was long considered the earliest known wood-cut. The saint is crossing the river with the Child-Christ on his shoulder; opposite, on the right bank, a hermit holds a lantern in front of his cell; on the left, a peasant with a bag on

his back climbs the steep ascent from his mill to his cottage high up on the cliff, where no swelling of the stream can reach it. The mutual attitude of the two heads is expressive, and the folds of the saint's robes are well cast about the shoulders, but otherwise there is little merit in the cut; the drawing shows the rude beginning of art, but an attempt to mark shadows by a greater or less width of line is noticeable,

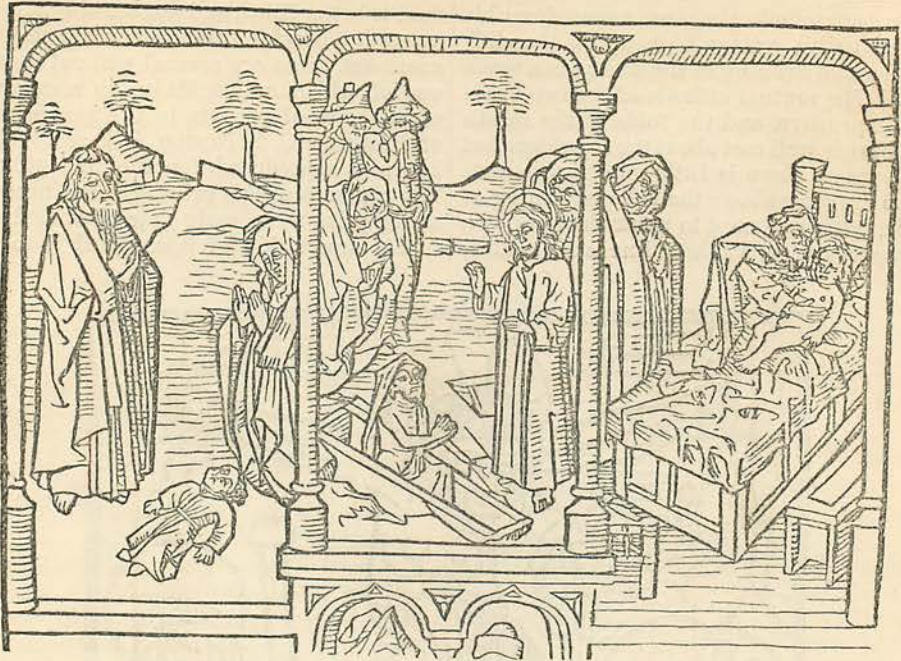
field is better filled, and the drawing more natural. Besides these and other dated examples, there are several without date, one of which, a Crucifixion, in a manuscript book of prayers in the possession of Professor C. E. Norton, is here by his kindness reproduced for the first time. The rudeness of this print does not necessarily point to an early date; but Ottley in his description of it assigned it to a



THE CRUCIFIXION.—[FROM MANUSCRIPT "BOOK OF DEVOTION," A.D. 1445.]

and the lines are more varied than is usually the case in very early work. The Virgin and Child in a Garden, preserved in the Royal Museum at Brussels, and dated 1418, is the earliest dated print; it is finer in design than the St. Christopher, the

time as early as 1445, which is the date of the manuscript itself. The Carthusian monk who transcribed his prayers in this book pasted it between the leaves, apparently with reference to an allusion, in the text of the page opposite the print, to the



ELIJAH RAISETH THE WIDOW'S SON. THE RAISING OF LAZARUS. ELISHA RAISETH THE WIDOW'S SON.

[FROM THE "BIBLIA PAUPERUM."]

blood of Christ, which is represented in it by spots and lines of vermilion ink on the body of the crucified Lord. On the left are the figures of the Virgin and Longinus; on the right, St. John and perhaps the Centurion; beneath are the gates of hell, with three patriarchs in limbo; in the upper left-hand corner is an angel holding the sacred handkerchief on which a representation of the face of the Saviour was miraculously impressed and preserved; and above, in the upper margin, are a scourge and a knife. Mr. Ottley says that this is one of the rudest prints he ever saw. It is certainly an interesting illustration of the early efforts of a rising art. Nearly all these prints were taken off in a pale brownish fluid, generally called brown distemper, and were printed by rubbing on the back of the paper. The St. Christopher and some other examples were printed in black ink, and with a press. They were usually colored by hand, or by means of a stencil plate, and the outlines being thus obscured, they were rendered much more pleasing to the eye than they now appear.

This was a rude beginning; but in the days of the Renaissance the aroused curiosity of men made them alert to seize any

means of breaking down that great barrier to popular civilization, the rarity of the instruments of intellectual instruction, and they soon perceived the serviceableness which lay in the ease and rapidity with which the new art multiplied impressions, and they assigned it more ambitious tasks. It was first applied to the reproduction of what are known as books for the poor (*Biblia Pauperum*), religious manuscripts rudely illustrated for the use of the poor preacher, which had been made as early as the twelfth century, in accordance with that famous saying of St. Gregory in regard to the wall-paintings in the churches, "The illiterate read in pictures, and therefore for the people, in a marked degree, painting takes the place of reading." These block books, or books printed from engraved wood blocks, were collections of Scriptural or moral illustrations, in the vacant spaces of which were introduced explanatory short sentences engraved in the wood block like any other portion of the cut; they were printed in the same brown distemper and by the same process of rubbing as the earlier single wood-cuts, and nearly all of them were published in the Netherlands or in

Germany. They have become very rare, but several have been minutely described, and some of the engravings have been reproduced in fac-simile. The cut on the opposite page is from the *Biblia Pauperum*, or Poor Preachers' Bible, which, although its first editions are undated and without the place of publication, is probably the earliest of the block books.* The accompanying cut represents fairly the style of en-

self and for what it reveals of the history of the art.*

There can be little doubt that the four editions of this work were issued in the Netherlands, where they must have appeared some time before 1483, and probably before 1454. The series of wood-cuts represents the life of Christ, with companion designs from Old Testament history or from tradition. The style is sim-



THE CREATION OF EVE.—[FROM THE "SPECULUM HUMANE SALVATIONIS."]

graving, which need not be characterized until—passing over the other early block books of greater or less merit, like the Apocalypse of St. John or the History of the Virgin—we have examined the *Speculum Humane Salvationis*, or Mirror of Human Salvation, which is the most interesting of all the block books both in it-

ilar to that of the earlier block books, but one sure mark of early work is noticeable—the design is far in advance of the execution, while in block books of un-

* It consists of forty small folio pages printed upon one side of the paper only, and so arranged that they can be pasted back to back; each of them is divided into five compartments, separated by the pillars and mouldings of an architectural design. In the centre is a representation of some scene from New Testament history, and on either side one from Old Testament history, illustrative or typical of that commemorated in the central design; both above and below are two half-length figures of holy men. Various texts are interspersed in the field, and Latin verses are written below the central compartments.

* It is a small folio, and contains fifty-eight engravings, each made up of two designs; the type is no longer cut in the block, but is movable and metallic, and instead of being placed in the field, it occupies the lower two-thirds of the page in double columns. The four earliest editions, two in Latin and two in Dutch, all undated and without the place of publication, were probably issued in the same country, because they are printed on paper of the same manufacture, with cuts from the same wood blocks, and in the same typographical manner, excepting a slight difference in some of the type, and the remarkable insertion in the last edition of twenty pages of type engraved on wood blocks. This country was probably the Netherlands, since the Dutch used is the pure dialect of North Holland in the beginning of the fifteenth century.

doubtedly German origin the mechanical skill excels the artistic power. In all the block books there is a realism well known to be a characteristic of the works of Van Eyck, the inventor of painting in oil, who founded a school of art which became renowned as the best outside Italy. The garb, physiognomy, and architecture also recall the court of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, where, owing to the commercial prosperity of the great Flemish towns, the arts of life were further advanced than anywhere else in Europe north of the Alps. The internal evidence of the engraving, therefore, leads to the conclusion that the block books were produced in the country which, on account of social conditions, was most likely to be their birth-place. If it be too much to grant that the Netherlands invented these books, it is at least clear that in that country the art was carried to its highest point in the first stage of its career; for in these books, although the engravings were much inferior to many of the miniatures of the earlier manuscripts, there was the beginning of artistic feeling. Engraving in wood, however, was still ignorant of its full resources. These simple outlines, shadowed by courses of short parallel lines and obscured by colors; these trees, flowers, and grass, symbolized rather than drawn; these countenances, in which the expression was often hard and feeble, often exaggerated to caricature, seldom natural and becoming; this naïve spirit, force ignorant of the channels of expression, and feeling inexpert at utterance—were still but the beginning of art. One step had been taken in advance of the manufacturing industry that produced cards and saints' figures, but engraving as yet revealed only the promise of an art that was to be. At this point, nevertheless, it was destined to stop for many years, and even to decline.

It had already done its greatest service to mankind in giving printing to the world; for out of these block books came movable type and Gutenberg's press. Wood-engravers looked on the new invention with no friendly eye. At the time—1450—they as well as the block printers were already organized in guilds extremely tenacious of their rights and jealous of their privileges, and were able to meet by united and aggressive opposition the rival art which threatened to supplant their own. This fact has been offered with some show

of probability in explanation of the extreme rudeness of the wood-cuts in early printed books, which with few exceptions were inferior even to the early saints' figures, and were most likely hacked out by printers' apprentices or unskilled workmen. The first dated printed book, the Psalter of Faust and Schoeffer, 1457, is a striking exception, for its initial letters have seldom been equalled in beauty of design and fineness of execution. They are printed in red and blue ink, the letters being of one color, and the ornamental portions of the other. But this book was not followed by others like it. The introduction of wood-cuts into books did not become a practice until 1471-5, when Gunther Zainer began it at Augsburg. At first the guilds opposed his admission as a burgher, and succeeded in having him forbidden to introduce wood-cuts or initial letters into his books, but a compromise was afterward made on condition of his employing members of the guild to do all the engraving. In Italy, a German, Ulric Hahn, published the first illustrated book at Rome in 1467; the wood-cuts in it have considerable merit. The first similar English book was Caxton's *Game and Playe of Chesse*, published about 1476, but its wood-cuts are coarse. Besides the jealous aloofness of the allied arts, another cause contributed powerfully to depreciate wood-engraving—the development of copper-plate engraving, the methods of which the former soon imitated, and so began a practice which has proved a continually recurring danger to the art. It first attempted to obtain color by cross-hatching—a process which has been described—the earliest example of which is in the frontispiece to *Breydenbach's Travels*, 1486, in the drapery of the figure of St. Catherine, to whose shrine on Mount Sinai Breydenbach and his companions, whose arms appear in the engraving, made their pilgrimage. Chatto considers this the finest wood-cut up to its time. Cross-hatching in wood-engraving first appears to any considerable extent in the somewhat famous Nuremberg Chronicle, 1492, the two thousand cuts of which were designed and their execution superintended by William Pleydendürf and Michael Wohlgenuth, the master of Albert Dürer. The volume has an archæological and curious rather than an artistic interest, but it is an excellent illustration of the difference between the German and Italian Renaissance.

The older style, in which the shadows were indicated by greater width of line and heavier marking, was developed in Italy in a succession of interesting books, and came to its most perfect work in that romantic and fantastic medley the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphile*, or Dream of Poliphile, in which the imagination of a Venetian monk, Francesco Colonna, has wrought upon a strange mass of mathematics, antiquities, mythology, love, and other materials. This remarkable book, which was published at Venice by the elder Aldus in 1499, is one of the most interesting monuments of Italian civilization—"the most concentrated, most comprehensive, and many-sided expression of the early Italian Renaissance," says Professor Sydney Colvin, "in its myriad enthusiastic moves at once. It is the early Renaissance drunk with antiquity, lifted up with the delights of marble and manuscript; a world rejoicing with the sense of new blood in its veins, new freedom in its thoughts, the lust of the eye and the pride of life made lawful and honorable again." It recalls Dante's great poem; the Renaissance Dominican also was a lover with his human Beatrice, of whom his Dream is the memorial and the glory; like Dante, he symbolized under the beauty and guardianship of his gracious lady a body of truth and a theory of life, and as Beatrice stood in Dante's poem for Divine wisdom and grace, his Polia stood for the new gospel of this world's joy, for the loveliness in ancient art and the wisdom in Greek philosophy; in adoring her he worships them, and in celebrating her as his guide through the mazes of his strange dream he celebrates the virtue and the hope which lived in the new Renaissance ideal of life. Besides the interest of this volume, arising from the poetic imagination of its author and the light with which it illumines its century, it derives its artistic value from its one hundred and ninety-two wood-cuts, which—here again I can not do better than quote from Professor Colvin—are "without their like in the history of wood-cutting. They breathe the spirit of that delightful moment when the utmost of imaginative naïveté is combined with all that is needed of artistic accomplishment, and in their simplicity are, in the best instances, of a noble composition, a masculine firmness, a delicate vigor, and grave tenderness, in the midst of luxurious or even licentious fancy, which can not be too much admired. They have that union

of force and energy with a sober sweetness, beneath a last vestige of the primitive which in the northern schools of Italy betokens the concurrent influence of the school of Montagna and the school of Bellini." They have been ascribed to many illustrious masters, but perhaps the conjecture which assigns them to Benedetto Montagna is the least wild. It would be interesting to compare this Italian work with the Nuremberg Chronicle in greater detail than I have space for; but although there was so great a difference between the Italian and the German artistic sense, yet already, before the *Dream of Poliphile* had appeared in Venice, in Germany wood-engraving was beginning its great career.

A change in the whole spirit and compass of the art was near. Wood-engraving was now on the verge of its great period, just passing into the era of its most splendid accomplishment. It was about to be chosen as an artistic mode of expression by two of the most powerfully imaginative minds that have ever wrought in art—Albert Dürer and Hans Holbein. It was Dürer who transformed the art, and revealed the variety and value of its resources. Up to his time it had been primitive; he left it mature. A practical worker in many arts, in sculpture, architecture, jewelry, and painting, as well as in engraving on copper and in wood, he was of especial and invaluable service to the latter. The copper-plates exhibit such delicacy of line and patient finish that they have never been surpassed in mechanical excellence. In engraving in wood he saw he must conform to other conditions; and developing the art according to its peculiar nature, he gave increased prominence to the lines and boldness to the design, and thus obtained novel and valuable effects. In all his work he is distinguished by a simple, direct force, a tender or mystical sentiment, a deeply suggestive but straightforward imagination. He interprets the imaginative world in terms of daily and often homely life; and should any with minds unhabituated to German tastes be led to look at his works or reproductions of them in our libraries, they may be shocked because he does not represent allegorical or sacred characters in ideal forms, but realistically, in forms such as he saw about him and studied directly. For him, beauty is German beauty, and life and its material surroundings are German life and German civilization.

There is no need of being irritated by this realism and this content with gross rather than beautiful forms, or of wishing, with Vasari, that he had been born in Italy and studied antiquity at Florence, since he would thus have missed the national endowment which individualized him and gave him charm. The undue sense of grotesqueness disappears as the eye becomes acquainted with the unfamiliar; and the emotion, the intellectual ideas, and imaginative truth expressed in these sometimes ugly moods are of that rare value which wins forgiveness for far greater defects of formal beauty than are apparent in Dürer's works. In the wood-cut of "Christ Mocked," what intensity is there! what a seizure of the malign mocking spir-



"CHRIST MOCKED."—[ENGRAVED BY ALBERT DÜRER.]

it in devilish possession of every lineament of the face and of every muscle working in that sinuous gesture! what ideal endurance in the Saviour's attitude! which needs not those symbols of His sorrows beside Him for pity, save that the fertile and romantic genius of Dürer must utter all of itself, and so fills every corner with secondary thought, subordinate suggestion, strangely wandering fancy, in unmeasured profusion. The application of this original and active mind to wood-engraving could not fail of great results. The fifteen cuts of the Apocalypse published in 1498, when Dürer was twenty-seven years old, marked an epoch in the art. They—as well as the later series of the "History of the Virgin," the "Great

Passion of Christ," and the "Little Passion," all of which appeared about 1511—soon became widely known, and were highly prized. Some of them were reproduced in copper by the famous Italian engraver Marc Antonio Raimondi, for whose plagiarism Dürer attempted to get reparation.

I know there are some who see but little to care for in Dürer's work. Not long ago a distinguished engraver told us that the true art was not a hundred years old, and called these earlier productions of Dürer and Holbein mere hacking out, not engraving at all. There is justice in his remark, if the mechanical side be alone considered; but the calling of a mechanical process into the service of high imagination and vigorous intellect is of more importance to men than any mere improvement in process, even though it have such brilliant consequences as followed Bewick's later innovations; and in this view the service of Dürer to wood-engraving was the giving sight to the blind and speech to the dumb; nor are its obligations to him and his associates to be lightly spoken of by the moderns. In comparison with modern work, this engraving does seem rude and hard, but our advance is largely due to the progress made in the manufacture of paper, and in processes of printing which allow the use of finer lines and a smaller scale. If Dürer's designs be reduced similarly, they lose many of their seeming defects, and his real power can be more clearly seen. It must not be forgotten that Dürer did not engrave his own designs. The designs were drawn sometimes on the block, sometimes on other materials, from which they were afterward copied upon the wood by other hands. There is no evidence to show that the designers in general ever themselves engraved, further than to direct their workmen, and possibly cut the more delicate parts, such as the heads and the extremities of the figures; on the other hand, the great number of engravings forbids the supposition that they cut any great portion of them, and the known practice in many cases was to employ subordinates.

Soon after Dürer had shown the capacity of the art, that impecunious emperor, the jest of the Italians, Maximilian I., became its great patron, and used it to describe the glory of his realm and reign. He made his court its home, as the court of Duke Philip, whose granddaughter he had

married, had been its birth-place. He called to his service Dürer, Burgkmair, and Schaufelin, and many more, and under their care were produced the great works which are among the principal monuments of the art in Germany. The greatest of them was the famous "Triumph of Maximilian," where a procession of warriors, nobles, and commons, on horse, foot, and in chariots, wound along in symbolical celebration of his pleasures, victories, and conquests, and picturesque display of the wealth, power, and resources of all his dominions. The herald of the triumph leads the march, after whom go two led horses supporting a large tablet, on which are written the titles of Maximilian: "Roman Emperor-elect and Chief of Christendom, King and Heir of Seven Christian Kingdoms, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, and of other grand Principalities and Provinces of Europe," etc.; his fifer Anthony, with his band of attendants; his falconer Teuschel, with his mounted subordinates, their hawks pursuing prey; his hunters of the chamois, the stag, the boar, and the bear, with their costumes of the chase, follow on; after them are many cars drawn by strange animals—elk, buffalo, camels, and the like, and filled with musicians playing various instruments; then the jesters (among them that famous Conrad von der Rosen whom Heine remembered), the fools, the maskers, the fencers, knights of the tourney and the jousts, and armed men of every service; then horsemen bearing standards of the emperor's hereditary provinces of Austria, those in which he has made war borne by cuirassed horsemen, the others by horsemen magnificently clad; then of the provinces of Burgundy; then lansquenets carrying banners inscribed with his wars and battles. So the procession lengthens out, for it can not be described in detail, in the trophy cars, representations of his marriage and his coronation, of the German Empire and the great wars—Flanders, Burgundy, Hungary, Naples, Guelders, Milan, the long Venetian war, an unending list—with symbols of military power, artillery, treasure, statues of great men, prisoners of war, the imperial standard, the sword of the empire, the princes, the counts, lords and knights, the savages of Calicut, and so on to the end—a splendid display of pomp. This great work, designed by Burgkmair, was first executed in miniature on one hundred and nine

pieces of parchment, and was afterward engraved in wood. It extended over a linear distance of one hundred and seventy-five feet, and employed seventeen engravers in its execution.

As a whole, it is a striking illustration of that more attractive part of Maximilian's character, by virtue of which he sympathized with the dying spirit of mediæval chivalry and the delight of mediæval pride. In later days such a work would have been impossible. Maximilian himself was half modern, the reformer of civil administration, the inventor of a post-office system, given to craft and bad faith in foreign relations. Besides this most famous of his works, he also planned a Triumphal Car, which Dürer designed for him, and a Gate of Triumph, both works of extraordinary size, and similar to the Triumphal Procession in intent and character. There are also two other curious records of imperial vanity, the prose work called *The Wise King*, and the poem, "The Adventures of Sir Theurdank," in which the example of Maximilian's life is offered for the instruction of princes, and the history of his deeds, amours, courtship, his adventures and his temptations, is written out, once for the edification, but now for the amusement, of the world. In *The Wise King* were two hundred and thirty-seven prints, designed by Burgkmair, and in "Sir Theurdank" one hundred and eighteen, ascribed to Schaufelin. All these works are pervaded by realism, and are therefore a mine for antiquarian research in costume and armor; but their artistic value is very variable, the designs by Dürer being, of course, pre-eminent. In style and execution they are of the same general character, and they employ cross-hatching considerably, in that following the example of the Nuremberg Chronicle. The same Germanic type also characterized the productions of the Netherlands, where one of the artists, Lucas van Leyden, deserves mention with Dürer.

Wood-engraving had now become a true art, and had developed its unsuspected powers. Beginning in the inartistic saints' figures, it first began to have value when realism was introduced into art. After the Renaissance came to restore to men long-disused and condemned functions, to give them nature, beauty, and pleasure in the things of this world, wood-engraving became a beautiful mode of ex-

pression for new and refined emotions. When the other arts went out from the exclusive service of the Church to the service of the princely and the wealthy, it also became secular, and its record of secular thought and feeling is the more valuable because, being a more truly popular art than the others, it influenced the

minds and reflected the spirit of a larger class. In Dürer's day it found out that it could do more than merely outline, that it could reproduce the artist's finished drawing; and from this discovery, and the adoption of it by artists for this purpose, dates its great career in the eighteenth century.

THE SEA-MAIDEN.

A Tilt Picture.

THERE was a lily and rose sea-maiden
 In marvellous depths of far-away seas,
 Whose eyes were blue, and whose head was laden
 With luminous curls like the honey of bees.

Half hidden by corals and swaying rushes
 And vines of the ocean, she sat arrayed
 In a tremulous veil of delicate blushes
 And robes of quivering light and shade.

The sun-fish came to worship her graces,
 The dog-fish lingered and marvelled beside,
 And she gayly smiled in their whimsical faces,
 And sang them songs till they laughed or cried.

A poet of earth looked down upon her,
 And loved, and beckoned, and told his love;
 But her soul was coy with a sea-maiden's honor,
 And she would not go to the world above.

So there he staid by the crystalline water;
 He leaned and gazed with his heart on fire;
 And died at last for the ocean's daughter—
 Died of sorrow and long desire.

And still she sits in the peace of ocean—
 The peace of the mouth of the ocean caves—
 A damsel without an earthly emotion,
 Who cares not for men, their loves, or their graves.

Thus, deep in calms of woman's life, covers
 Herself some maiden, on aureate sands
 Of duty and innocence, far from lovers,
 From beatings of hearts and reachings of hands.