

The sun has found out this venerable stem amidst the shade, and distinguishes its silver bark, on which the pilgrim painter has engraved the humble homage of his name, and its braid of magnolias and varied creepers, with a fervid flake of splendour, which, by reflection, lights up the yellow rocks around. Beside it, one little aloe-shaped plant is spired with crimson flowers, that look like drops of Indian blood, shed by the cross-hilted weapon, in the name of the Madre de Dios, there falling into the ground, and there springing up again, honoured by the maternal compassion of Nature with that delicate form.

From the sharpest articulations of these objects, which would in the reality be discernible, up to the most delicate mysteries of the airy mountain, all is rendered with the untraceable and ceaseless gradations of nature; her multitudinousness and brightness are expressed without a moment's forgetfulness of her vastness, and complexity, and atmospheric modifications, and all is subjected by this master-mind to a grand and graceful unity and harmony. Specially welcome is the last result, in this our own but unsatisfactory period of landscape painting, in which a heavily-glaring, one-sided parade of the *letter* so commonly omits the *spirit*, a smattering of geological and botanical minutiae takes place of the old poetical or true Art-feeling for beauty; and disorder and insubordination—a predominance of littleness of every kind—are frequently prevalent, from disregard of principles and laws, cast aside by crude ignorance, without distinction of good and bad, and nicknamed, all alike, by that much-abused word, conventionalism. Mr. Church's picture is the complete union we are acquainted with of literal minuteness with freedom, freshness, and a comprehensive, simplifying grasp of the higher spirit of the whole scene. The painter draws excellently: the minutest and most intricate details are touched off at once with a spirited grace, which contrasts remarkably with the heavy drudgery of our Pre-Raphaelites; and the same sense of beauty which gives free, wavy life to stems and leaves, models his mountains; so that, as in Nature, sublimity is built up of beauty. The fresh vigour of hue, unimpaired by the precision and minuteness, especially charmed us. The aerial perspective is wonderful—quite equal, we believe, to any ever painted; and of *clear-obscure* (to translate the foreign terms *literally*, for the sake of our particular meaning), this is surely one of the finest of instances. The *obscure* of the nearer mountain is the most picturesque and striking contrast possible to the *clear* of the foreground and remoter distance; and, moreover, highly judicious in a case where, had all been clear alike, the eye and the mind would have been oppressed with far too much. The picture combines more than any other we know, the minute and literal truth at which the Pre-Raphaelites aim imperfectly, with Turner's greatness and grace of conception. On this American more than on any other—but we wish particularly to say it without impugning his originality—does the mantle of our greatest painter appear to us to have fallen. Westward the sun of Art still seems rolling.

While we remained pondering on the landscape, another visitor interposed before us, closely and rapidly skimming over its different points, and offering up to it little nods of cordial admiration. He turned him round. It was one of our most distinguished landscape painters, the most so, perhaps: his large and somewhat rough form, his clear, lively eye, and looks plain, honest, and straightforward, like his pictures, at once proclaimed him. "A wonderful picture—a wonderful picture!" he exclaimed; "the man must be a great genius."

It has frequently occurred to us—and never more forcibly than when contemplating this very beautiful painting—that America offers a wide and grand field for our landscape artists. Why do not some of them take a trip thither? the voyage is not long, and the cost need not be great. If the Old World is not exhausted, it has become so familiar to us that we seem to know almost every spot of interest or picturesque beauty that it has to show; but the New World is, as yet, almost untrudged ground in Art, and we see in Mr. Church's work what it affords to those who know how to use such materials. Many of our painters travel south and east, and a few have occasionally gone north; we would now recommend them to try the western world.

VISITS TO ART-MANUFACTORIES.

No. 9.—THE CLAN-TARTAN WOOD-WORK MANUFACTORY OF MESSRS. SMITH, AT MAUCHLINE, AYRSHIRE.

THE Tourist in Scotland who has any higher object in view than going a certain number of miles by boat and rail, for the purpose of "doing" a certain number of celebrated places, who has an eye for other beauties besides "the Moors," and who takes an interest in the people as well as in their lakes and mountains, ought, if possible, to visit Ayrshire. We know no more pleasant locality in which to spend a few long summer days than this, the "land of Wallace, Bruce, and Burns." Picturesque in scenery, celebrated in national history, and consecrated in song, it possesses the attractions which great deeds and great genius have equally the power to confer; and while among its people, the visitor will find vividly recalled to his mind—of course with the modifications of a century—the customs, language, and characters, of the works of Scotland's greatest poet, Robert Burns. When in "the land of Burns," of course, he must visit Mauchline, which, indeed, may be called its centre, so thickly scattered round it are spots consecrated to the poet's muse. In the village itself lived and died many of his intimate friends, and the characters of his poems; its old kirk-yard was the scene of his "Holy Fair;" half a mile from it stands "that lonely cot, Moss-giel;" and in the immediate vicinity are the "Braes of Ballochmyle," "Catherine Woods," "the Hermit Ayr," "the Lugar Water," and "the Castle o' Montgomery." The visitor will find the village pleasantly situated, with a quiet Sunday-all-the-week-round sort of look, that will do his heart good if he comes direct from the din and smoke of any of our large towns; and should he arrive, as we did, in the "calm simmer gloamin'," as he passes the churchyard, the white tombstones will gleam eerily out upon him, as if the shrouded forms of the poet's creations had once more congregated in the scene of their *un-holy* Fair. The good folks of Mauchline, he will discover, possess all the "canny" peculiarities of their countrymen, and are locally famous for their floriculture and flower-shows.

In a district so purely agricultural, one would scarcely expect to find any workman more artistic than the village carpenter or blacksmith; yet here, in this, before the advent of railways, most sequestered nook, has arisen and flourished an Art manufactory, with its staff of well-trained and intelligent Art workmen, annually producing an immense variety of articles, which, from their elegance and beauty, find a ready sale, not only in Britain, but even among our tasteful Continental neighbours.

Not a few of our readers, we imagine, must have seen specimens of the Mauchline work, and may, perhaps, have admired the brilliant colours of their tartaned and enamelled-like surface, or the beauty and finish of their painted vignettes, without being aware of the place or mode of their production. To a brief description of this manufactory, so far unique, owing its origin and having its habitat entirely confined to this locality, we propose, therefore, to devote the following paragraphs.

In thinking of the origin of this manufactory, it strikes us, that had we time and space, it might not be uninteresting to moralise a little on the fact of some of our most useful manufactures owing their existence primarily to the useless or even vicious habits of our artificial life. But to go no further than the one in hand, the Mauchline Tartan-work owes its origin to what some consider the senseless and useless, and others the nasty, practice of taking snuff. For had people not snuffed, there would have been no need of snuff-boxes, and had there been no snuff-boxes, it is more than probable there would have been no Mauchline Tartan-work either. The produce of the snuff-box, however, has been more beneficial than that of Pandora's, and while passing through the extensive workshops of the Messrs. Smith, we could not help quoting, in unaffected wonder, the motto on the retired snuff merchant's carriage,—

"Who would have thought it,
That noses would have bought it!"

We recommend the fact to Mr. Fairholt, for the next edition of his "Tobacco."

More than thirty years ago, in the little village of Laurencekirk, a man made snuff-boxes of white wood, somewhat more neatly than most others in the market, and to mechanical excellence added artistic decoration in a small way, in the shape of sketches in Indian ink, representing huntsmen and hounds, rural scenes, &c., &c., which, being afterwards varnished over, had sufficient attractions to secure some popularity. The decoration became, by degrees, more elaborate, and may be traced through several stages of development. To the rural and hunting scenes succeeded a complication of inter-lacing lines denominated "worming;" then there was a return to natural objects, and the eyes of snuff-takers were regaled with wreaths of vine leaves and tempting bunches of grapes; once more the conventional succeeded in the form of checks in black, of various patterns; and this being the immediate precursor, seems to have suggested the idea of imitating tartans by chequering the articles with different colours.

Here the history of the work leads us to Mauchline, and introduces to our notice the names of Andrew and William Smith, two men to whose energy and taste it is entirely indebted for the rank it is justly entitled to hold among the *indigenous* arts of North Britain. From a small beginning these two brothers had, and one of them still has, the satisfaction of seeing this branch of industry yearly increasing; proving not only profitable in a business point of view, but also beneficial to the locality, and consequently to the country in which it is carried on.

It was in Mauchline, and by the Messrs. Smith, that the Tartan-work proper, or chequering in colours, was first introduced. These patterns were either mere fanciful combinations of colour, or copies of certain patterns known as clan-tartans. The origin and history of the latter is so interesting, and at the same time so intimately connected with the subject in hand, that we must devote a few lines specially to them.

The Breacan, Breacan, or Tartan plaid, had its origin in a very remote antiquity. It formed a principal article of dress among the Gaels, and its peculiar ornamentation, consisting in the arranging of various colours, in certain recognised patterns, was made a mode of distinguishing the different clans or tribes, each of whom clung most tenaciously to its own. Like most semi-barbarous nations, their tartans show the Celts to have been fond of colour, and most skilful in its arrangement—so much so, at least, that no modern imitations surpass or even equal them in beauty. Of course, from the somewhat sterile nature of their country, the colour of the Celts cannot compare in brilliancy with that of oriental or southern lands; but in their quiet arrangements they are unsurpassed. In these they had Nature to guide them, and followed her faithfully. The very dark varieties seem to have their combinations suggested by the wintry aspect of some bleak hill-side, when there was no sunshine, and before the snow had fallen on its naked summit. Of this class the "Sutherland" may be taken as a type. Then in others, like the "Campbell" or the "Gordon," we have the same hill-side, but when spring had given it a brighter tint, and set a wreath of golden furze on its brow. In some you may detect a streak of the bright berries of the mountain ash—the Rowan tree of Scotland; in others a thread of hare-bells or gentian; while a perfect host have enriched themselves with the glorious hues which a heath-covered Scotch mountain gives out, when it is struck by the rays of the rising sun, or at noon, or better still at sunset, when it literally glows and welters in the richest purple, that a Tyrean might have *died* to imitate. For their reds, they had only to watch the sun set behind the mountains of Mull any fine night in autumn; and their crimson, where it came from, many a poor clansman knew to his cost. But wherever the aesthetic properties of the tartan were derived from, convenience, which may indeed have suggested, must certainly have proved the use of the darker toned varieties, both in the pursuits of the chase and in more sanguinary expeditions.

To their use for the purpose of concealment Sir Walter Scott somewhere alludes, if we mistake not,

in his "Lady of the Lake," in speaking of the clansmen, who, crouched upon the ground, were

"Scarce to be known by curious eye
From the dark heather where they lie,
So well was matched the tartan screen,
With heath-bell dark and bracken green."

The tartan, too, has interest from its historical association with the fate of the unfortunate Stuarts. Like them, it was proscribed, for, in 1747, the government forbade the use of the Celtic garb; and, till 1782, when this ridiculous law was repealed, it was a badge of outlawry and disgrace. At the latter date, however, a variety of causes combined in preventing the withdrawal of the prohibition from having much effect in reviving this national dress. Many of the brave hearts who had espoused the cause of the White Rose had withered and died "ayont the sea," and to those who were left behind its associations would perhaps be too painful for them to be anxious to revive it. The clans were scattered, and the ameliorating influence of judicious government, and the advance of civilization, gradually effaced nearly all their outward, as well as inward, distinctions. Sir Walter Scott and George IV. are the two men to whom the tartan is indebted for its revival. The former directly by his writings, in which he so lovingly depicted Highland scenes and characters; the latter indirectly by his visit to the northern part of his kingdom, and the enthusiasm displayed on the occasion. Old claymores were furnished up that had lain rusty for many a day; the chiefs summoned their clansmen: but many of them looked in vain for their costumes. There was a confusion, not of tongues, but of tartans. Those whose ancestors in former days waged deadly feud were, by some sad blunder of the *costumier*, made as like each other as "Corsican brothers." From many a Highland hut were hunted up faded rags, relics, it may be, of the '45, as authorities for the manufacture of a fresh supply. But even these gave but "an uncertain sound"—here a McGregor might be called a McTavish, there a Gordon might pass for a Graham, till the Messrs. Smith came to the rescue, and, by the publication of "The Clan-Tartans of Scotland," a work compiled with great labour and care, helped to save from certain oblivion this interesting branch of Scottish archaeology. The service they rendered in this respect was very properly acknowledged by the Scottish Society of Antiquaries; and the mention of it may appropriately preface a description of the factory whence it issued.

The traveller leaving Mauchline on a visit to Mossiel will pass on his right a large building stretching backwards from the road, with the usual factory attributes,—rows of windows, outside stairs, the hum of an engine, a tall chimney, and a flag of smoke. We advise him to enter, as he may be assured not only of a polite reception, but also of receiving from the explanations of Mr. Smith, or an intelligent *employé*—to whom we owe many thanks—much useful and interesting information.

In our tour of observation, we come first to men engaged in reducing the raw material into a more convenient form for future operations—that is, in sawing up logs of wood into pieces of various sizes. We should here observe that the wood of the sycamore, or, as it is called in Scotland, the plane-tree—the *Acer pseudo-platanus* of botanists—is solely employed in this manufacture, on account of its close, even texture, which, without being too hard, makes it a pleasant material to work in: to these properties may be added its lightness, which gives to articles made of this wood all the advantages of papier-mâché—of which, indeed, we find it a common mistake to suppose the Mauchline goods to be made.

The wood, having been reduced to a more convenient form, then goes to the different "makers," whose operations of course vary with the articles they make.

On entering the spacious and well-lighted workshop, whose gallery, clock, and general appearance somewhat reminds us of some, though vastly superior to many, of the edifices called churches by Dissenters in Scotland, we find here on one side a number of turning lathes, at which men are busily engaged in making a great variety of articles, such as needle-cases, match-boxes, vinaigrettes, brooches, rings, trays, and a host of others too numerous to mention. Then, on the other side, we find another set engaged in shaping by the hand a different class of goods,

such as paper-cutters, &c.; and lastly, we come to the articles composed of different pieces, such as card-cases, glove-boxes, envelope-cases, reticules, &c., and which may be termed the constructive department. The number of the component parts of some of these articles, and the neatness and ingenuity with which they are put together, are most remarkable. Take up for a sample this little octagon needle-case, which contains no fewer than twenty-six different pieces of wood, yet to all appearance it seems cut out of the solid block, so exactly are its different parts fitted together.

But we must not enter farther into detail regarding the process of manufacture, but proceed to the mode of decoration. All the articles, whatever be the subsequent embellishment intended for them, are grounded in black. Formerly, we believe this was not the case, a white ground having been given for the lighter varieties of tartan; but experience has shown that the black is preferable, from its giving greater depth and brilliancy to the subsequently overlaid colours.

We arrive now at the department devoted to "chequering," which is performed by machines at once simple and ingeniously effective; but which, without the aid of illustration, we can scarcely hope intelligibly to describe. The original machine consists of a single drawing pen, so fitted into the machine that it can draw straight lines with great ease and precision. The workman having, like a weaver, his pattern before him, by means of a notched wheel regulates the lines and spaces. All the lines in the pattern of one colour being completed, he cleans his pen, and proceeds with a fresh one. A certain order is observed in laying on the colours, according to the positions they hold in the pattern. The improved machine, patented by the Messrs. Smith, by means of a great number of pens is able to draw all the lines of one colour, in one direction, at once—which, of course, facilitates greatly the rate of execution. Some articles, from their form, however, necessitate the employment of the old one.

The peculiar beauty of the Mauchline tartan-work is very discernible on comparing it with that executed in lithography, or by any other process—the colours are so pure, the blending so harmonious, and the half-tints, from being laid on in successive lines of pure colour, have a delightful depth and transparency, without the least approach to mudiness.

The chequering is not confined to the workshop, as you may discover on passing down the village street, where through a window here and there you may see busily at work not a few whose age or other circumstances render it more agreeable for them to sit by their own firesides, and who are thus provided with the means of subsistence, and a light and pleasant employment.

After the articles have received their coats of tartan, each is labelled with its proper name, and goes to be varnished. After receiving two coats of varnish, they are smoothed down with fine sand or emery paper, and get five more. They go then to the girls, who polish them up till that beautiful surface is acquired to which we have already referred.

This makes the simpler articles complete; the more complex go now to be "fitted up." Inkstands get their bottles, pincushions their stuffing, boxes their locks, brooches their pins, and, in short, everything that has got anything like an "inside" gets it put in, severed limbs get united, parts useless while separate become by union useful wholes. Now, before we leave this part of the work, we have only to see the girls take them up tenderly and swathe them in tissue, ere they are sent off for present orders, or laid past for future use.

Our *cicerone* now conducts us to what is *par excellence* the artistic department, the *atelier* of the workmen engaged in painting the vignettes. The articles intended to receive paintings, we ought to observe, come here first, before going through any of the stages already referred to. These paintings, executed entirely by the hand, are of all sizes, from the tiny "bit" transferred to the top of a needle-case, to the large quarto-sized landscape, intended for the side of an expensive writing folio. They consist mostly of views of Scottish scenery, especially spots celebrated in history or song, as well as scenes of the chase, including copies of some of Landseer's well-known pictures. Here, at the

top of the room, sits the *premier* artist, engaged, it may be, on a view of one of our sweetest Highland lochs, which he will finish with all the care and delicacy of a miniature, or with an engraving before him, rendering into colour Sir Edwin's "Stag at Bay," or "the Monarch of the Glen." In these days, when our Art must, like everything else, be done by estimate and by steam (Heaven keep this from becoming its doom!), the work which is produced in this department of the Messrs. Smith's manufactory does not a little credit both to their enterprise and good taste.

Having come to the close of the manufacturing process, we shall just step into the ware-room for a moment, for the purpose of seeing the accumulated results of the whole. Here the first thing that "strikes a stranger" will be the great variety of the articles made: a choice for all ages and sexes—babies' powder boxes and old wives' spectacle-cases; articles to be carried in the pocket, or stuck on the person, set on the parlour mantelpiece, or laid on the drawing-room table—all sorts of things that anybody or everybody could fancy are here congregated. We must not forget to mention also the beautifully bound books, with their tartan boards and painted vignettes, as among the most attractive objects in the room. What more appropriate souvenirs of a Scottish tour could be found than, for instance, a copy of "Scott's Poems," in tartan boards, with a delicately executed view of some Border keep or Highland loch, rendered classic by his muse; or "The Songs of Robert Burns," bound in wood from the barn-roof of Mossiel, while occupied by the poet, and warranted genuine. Indications these are of the experience of a number of years, and of a watchful attention to public taste.

But besides those which at present form the staple of articles made, there might be mentioned not a few which the course of time and change of fashion have rendered obsolete. In the "pre-historic annals," or "geological periods," or whatever else you like to call it, of the Mauchline manufactory, there is quite a series of different formations. We shall only dig up two fossil remains for the satisfaction of our readers. The first is a specimen of what was at one time a very numerous class, and is called "the Breadalbane button," from having first been made for the noble marquis of that name. A favourite embellishment for buttons was a canine head, but "every dog has its day," and the Mauchline ones, having ceased to please, died a natural death. The other we shall refer to is very beautiful, being a style of decoration somewhat resembling arabesques, sometimes executed on a gold ground, very rich, but rather expensive; and so it also passed away.

Our brief notice of this interesting manufactory must now come to a close, not so much from having exhausted our subject as from having filled our space. It is unnecessary, we faintly hope, to commend its productions to the notice of our readers, they are sufficiently able to commend themselves: they have done so pretty effectively for a good many years, and we doubt not will continue to command a still greater share of public approval. It is true they have not the overpowering claims to utility which economists of the Gradgrind school deem indispensable. It is also true that they have not the privilege of being brought from abroad, which by some is considered essential to artistic excellence. Mauchline is nearer home than Munich or Milan, and Ayrshire has not such a name as the Alhambra; but notwithstanding this, we feel assured that that spirit of our age, which is beginning to appreciate the proper sphere of our artistic development; which is resuscitating our only national style of architecture, will not look with disfavour on any other branch of native Art. The tartan, too, has special claims on attention, as the only indigenous form of textile decoration now extant.

To the men, in conclusion, to whose energy and taste this manufactory owes its origin, and to their successors, who are to come after them, we would say, "Well done!" Though they don't call you Sanzio or Cellini, but only plain Smith, there is a place reserved in the temple of beauty for your work also. Remember,

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;"

and the "thing" may be a match-box or a needle-case, and it may be many feet of canvas.