AN
ADDRESS to the PUBLIC
ON THE
Polygraphic Art.
INVENTED
By MR. *JOSEPH BOOTH*,
PORTRAIT-PAINTER.

Utque Artes pariat Solertia Nutriat usus.

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OF THE
POLYGRAPHIC ART.

MECHANICAL INVENTION is one of the great pillars that support the grandeur of the British Empire. Though there are various manufactures and arts, in which other nations, especially the Germans, equal us in respect of excellence; with regard to expedition we are unrivalled. Hence, notwithstanding the high expence of living, and the growing pressure of accumulated taxes, in articles of iron, steel, wool, cotton, turnery, earthen ware, and others, we are able to undersell nations where labour is twice as cheap as in England, the expence of living twice as low, and taxes more than twice as moderate.

But it was reserved to MR. BOOTH, the author of this invention, of multiplying pictures in oil

colours, with all the properties of the original paintings, whether in regard to outline, expression, size, variety of tints, or other circumstances, to apply with success, Mechanical invention, and particularly the power of Chemistry to the diffusion, perpetuation, and in some respects, even the improvement of the most generally pleasing and captivating of the liberal arts.

The invention of multiplying or copying pictures in oil colours by a mechanical and chemical process, was at first stiled POLYPLASIASMOS, a Greek word signifying multiplication. But, the Gentlemen who have united themselves with the inventor into a Society for the purpose of protecting and patronizing this ingenious art, have determined to design it, in future, by the title of POLYGRAPHIC: a term more analogous to that of their own profession, and at the same time, more expressive of the invention in question, the grand object, and distinguishing property, or characteristic of which, is, to produce many pictures.

The great end and advantage of the Polygraphic Art, then, is, that by a mechanical and chymical process, without any touch or finishing by the hand, and without any injury whatever to the original painting, it produces such an exact copy, or likeness, as cannot without difficulty and close attention, be distin-

guished from the archetype, even by the eye of an Artist or Connoisseur, and such as possesses all the qualities, and produces the full effect, of the most finished painting; while the price at which it can be delivered to the public is a mere trifle, commonly under, but never exceeding the tenth part of the value of the original. The experience of twelve years, renders it probable, and indeed almost certain, that these pictures being done in oil colours, will, at least equal their originals in point of duration. For this new system of drawing and colouring is not subject to change, cracking, peeling, or any other of those inconveniencies, which too frequently attend first rate pictures painted in the usual way: so that it will multiply pictures in such a manner as to perpetuate the genius, style, and effect of the most celebrated painters, to the most distant ages.

Of the perfection to which the inventor of the Polygraphic Art, supported by the Polygraphic Society, has been enabled to raise it, at a great expence of money and of time, the public will judge. The originals are shewn along with the copies, and in the same row; a circumstance which brings whatever excellency or imperfections may attend the latter, directly under the eye of the spectator, and without which it is impossible to judge of their perfections, or

defects. But, in justice to the Polygraphic Art, it is to be observed, that this, like other arts, is progressive; and that its merit, as it is not circumscribed, is not to be determined by the present state of its progress. It was impossible that the inventor of the Polygraphic Art could execute the whole of the copies, now exhibited to the public view, with his own hands. Much of his time has been devoted to the instruction of pupils, to whose aid he was obliged of necessity to have recourse; and who, it is reasonable to suppose, have not yet attained to that point of excellence, which will result from prolonged observation, habit, and experience.

As the original picture receives not the least injury from the operation of multiplying copies, so neither does it suffer any diminution in point of value. On the contrary, the more that copies of any piece of painting are multiplied, and the more widely that they are diffused, like the Cartoons or the Madonna della Sedia of the divine Raphael, they become the more valuable. And such marks can always be put on the original, as will distinguish it from the copy, were the Polygraphic Art arrived to such a degree of perfection as to render it difficult or impossible for an Artist to distinguish his own production:

a matter which on a cursory view has already happened.

It frequently happens that men of distinguished rank and reputation are solicited by their friends, and would be willing to sit for their pictures, if this did not consume more time than their avocations will allow. And some, in order to avoid this trouble and

waste of time, have procured likenesses or models of their heads in wax, to serve as subjects to the painter, when they had amind to send their picture to a friend. By the Polygraphic Art, portraits may be multiplied to any number, without the trouble of sitting a second time, and at an expence which, compared with the usual rates of portrait painting is a mere trifle.

Painting may be considered under three different views: first, as an ingenious art; secondly, as influencing morals; and thirdly as an object of policy and an article of commerce. In all these respects the invention now offered to the patronage of the public will be found worthy, it is hoped, of their countenance and protection. With regard to the first of these considerations, whatever ingenuity and skill may be displayed by the painter, whatever emotion may be excited by fancy combining from the stores of nature

and history, separate particulars and facts in unity of design, whatever, in a word the most ardent and most cultivated genius can invent, is not superseded by the Polygraphic Art; but on the contrary, will be found in the end to be promoted by it and encouraged. For this invention is not necessarily confined in its exercise or application, to such paintings as are already in the possession of the public. New designs may be formed which this art may multiply. And as no copy can be made without an original, and as the Polygraphic Society will make a point of having a certain number of new subjects done for them every year, the interests of living Artists, and especially of the British Painters, instead of being injured by this mechanical and chemical process, will be greatly promoted. And as it will encrease the employment of eminent artists, so it will contribute in no small degree to the improvement of students, who being accustomed to imitate the style and manner, will catch in some degree the genius of the greatest masters, and attain to distinguished excellence in grandeur and elegance of contour, correctness of design, brilliant colouring, and well effected mass of light and shade. On this head, let it be further observed, that the first introduction of young artists into practice and fame, is commonly that of portrait painting, a branch of business which

will still remain in their hands, and which the facility of multiplying copies of originals will infallibly tend to encrease. And, in general, at a time when we have many painters of established reputation, and others are rising into fame, an invention which by a general diffusion of the most admired subjects creates a more general taste for the arts, cannot but have a favourable influence on the fortunes of artists; Mechanical Invention of every kind, by reducing the price of commodities and manufactures, multiplies customers, and extends their sale: so that in the issue, the encreased number of machines, recalls for their management, and probably at advanced wages, the very hands which were thrown loose at first by their introduction. The invention of cotton mills at first excited among the laboring manufacturers of cotton, yarn, and stuffs in Lancashire a general alarm, yet the extension of trade which those mills have occasioned, has rather encreased the number of hands employed in the manufactures of cotton than diminished them. In like manner, may we not fairly suppose, that the multiplication of pictures, may cherish and diffuse a general taste for painting, and thereby give employment and encouragement to the

masters and adepts in that imitative art? At present fine paintings, are to be purchased only by men in

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the possession of large fortunes. Reduce their price; they may be purchased, and will be purchased by men of middling, and even of humble fortunes. In this case, the ingenious painter has it in his power, to appeal in behalf of his fortune and his fame, from one patron, to a candid and generous public. He depends not on one, or two men, which is slavery; but upon the general voice of his countrymen, and the whole world, which is freedom. He forms a design of such excellence, that the proprietors of the Polygraphic Art treat with him for the copyright of the original, in the same manner that booksellers treat with authors.

Before the invention of printing, books were so dear that they were within the compass only of Lords and Princes, or men in general of Princely fortunes. The press has put books in the hands of all ranks of men; and so, it may be reasonably presumed, this invention will adorn the halls and other apartments of all ranks and orders of the people. And, as the art of printing has multiplied Authors, so that of Polygraphy will, in all probability, encrease the number of painters.

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The same thing, however paradoxical it may at first sight appear, may be predicted with respect to engravers, whose art has ever been looked on, and justly, as an ingenious acquisition to the stores of elegant amusement; and in many businesses as particularly useful. The inventor and the patrons of the Polygraphic Art, are very far from entertaining a wish, and if they did, they could never hope that it would ever, in any degree, discourage engraving. It will in all probability extend it, and bring it more and more into general vogue and request, among all orders and conditions of men. Not only will such persons as delight in prints, continue to purchase prints, as those who take pleasure in pictures, will purchase pictures when these are within the compass of their fortune; but the multiplication of pictures, by the general diffusion of a taste for painting, instead of giving a check to the ingenious art of engraving, will tend greatly to encourage it; and these sister arts must share one common fate, and rise and fall together.

This position, the inventor and the patrons of the Polygraphic Art, anxious to vindicate this discovery, and the use they intend to make of it from false anticipations, beg leave to confirm and illustrate. The whole of the arts and

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sciences are linked together in one chain, and taste and proficiency in any one of them, naturally leads to taste and proficiency in others. It is the object of science to trace the laws, and of the liberal arts to imitate the appearances of nature. In nature, therefore, they meet and are concentrated; and he who is conversant with one of them, from their vicinity and alliance with each other, has an opportunity, and is naturally induced to form an acquaintance and intimacy with the rest. Accordingly, in every age, and every nation, the arts and sciences, the sister Muses go hand in hand, and advance in their collateral courses in the most perfect harmony. Does a taste for Architecture repel, and destroy a taste for painting? Does a taste for painting imply an aversion to poetry? or is the mind

and heart which is sensible to the charms of poetical fancy and design, indifferent to the strains of music? No: It is quite otherwise. It is in the beautiful and magnificent palace that we naturally look for paintings. The mind that delights in the contemplation of landscape and historical painting, relishes also a well and conducted epic poem or history: and the investigation of cause and effect, again, in legitimate historical composition, is near a-kin to investigation of every kind, and to the exercise of the reasoning faculty in general, whether it be employed

in morality, pneumaticks, physics, or in mathematics, pure or mixed.

As all the Arts and Sciences, then, are harmoniously connected, and mutually influence and support each other, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the general diffusion of a taste for painting, will be accompanied with a general diffusion of a taste for engraving, as well as sculpture, statuary and every kindred art. Pictures and prints have their respective advantages; and both may be sought after, and admired by the same person. It will readily be allowed that prints are not by any means such proper articles of furniture as paintings: for the most characteristical beauties of prints, are in a great measure lost when framed, glazed, and disposed as ornaments for rooms, halls, and galleries. The delicate touch of the engraving tool loses its enchanting effect, when placed at any distancee [sic] from the eye. The finest engravings are accordingly kept in port folios; a situation which undoubtedly furnishes the most commodious opportunities of contemplating their beauties.

Having thus considered the invention of Polygraphy as an art, and shewn the favourable influence it will have on the advancement

and diffusion of painting, engraving, and all kindred arts; we proceed under the second view, in which we said, painting might be considered; to observe, that the multiplication of pictures by means of the invention of the Polygraphic Art, has a tendency to strengthen religious principles and conceptions, and to improve the morals of the people. The most striking scenes recorded in the sacred scripture, faithfully delineated by the glowing pencil, pass into the minds even of the rudest beholders, with equal ease, efficacy, and delight, and awaken those sentiments of devotion and of love, which they are so well fitted to inspire. And, independently of the effect of subjects taken from the Sacred Scriptures, painting softens and humanizes the mind, and purifies it from gross and pernicious appetites and passions, by cherishing a taste for elegant and virtuous pleasures. It inspires, like the other liberal arts and moral sciences, a social sweetness of disposition. A taste for the fine arts is incompatible with ferocity of manners. It even restrains the fury of war, and by exercising sympathy, promotes friendly intercourse, peace and good will among men. Polite literature and the fine arts exhibit representations of human nature, placed in various interesting situations. The reader, as well as the amateur, enters by sympathy into a thousand characters,

circumstances, and situations, and is influenced by a thousand social and humane emotions, which would not have been excited in his breast, by all the occurences and

vicissitudes of the most variegated life. Thus they become in some measure citizens of the world. The antipathies and prejudices which set men at variance with one another, are gradually worn off. The enlarged mind acquires an habit of indulgence and forbearance. Nothing that belongs to human nature; no peculiarity in national character, no failing or imperfection of the individual member of society moves either the ridicule or the aversion of the ingenuous mind accustomed to contemplate nature and humanity under an infinite variety of forms, and to feel that sentiment so often quoted from the Latin comic Poet, "I myself am a man, and I cannot remain untouched by the joys or sorrows of human nature." Painting, in particular, is favourable to virtue: it teaches important lessons in a language universally understood: and by recording merit, excites a noble and virtuous emulation. It is foreign to the present purpose, indeed, to celebrate the praises of the liberal arts; but it is difficult to abstain from some sally of panegyric, when the domain of the imitative art is on the point of being so greatly enlarged, and the prospect that is opened by the Polygraphic

Invention, is so pleasing as well as vast and unbounded.—What influence may not this invention have over the pursuits and pleasures of men? and what polish may it not give to their manners?

But, it is, in a political and commercial light which was the third view, as was observed, in which painting might be considered, that this multiplying art is of the highest importance. It must appear obvious to every person of discernment, that painting as an art contributes in an eminent degree to the grandeur and consequence of a nation. It tends to raise a national character and to invite to the countries in which it flourishes, travellers of distinction from other kingdoms: the invention of Polygraphy encourages a genius for painting, and, by reducing the prices of the ornamental branches of that art, it will give an air of elegance, and magnificence, to our houses in the eye of foreigners, who will be tempted to carry into their own countries those articles of splendid furniture which are purchased at so easy a rate in this. And thus this invention it is to be hoped, will prove no inconsiderable source of national wealth. But on this important head of the utility of this invention, as the means of furnishing elegant furniture, and as a source of national wealth, it will be proper to speak at greater length.

Real grandeur does not consist in a profusion of gold and tinsel shew, which dazzles the sight by the vividness and riches of colour, but neither amuses the fancy, nor engages the heart. The eye is never so much pleased, as when the object of perception gives exercise to the fancy and calls into action the various energies of the mind: a purpose for which allegorical and historical paintings are particularly adapted.

There is no method now in use, of producing an expressive, interesting, and highly finished picture, that is not attended with the most exquisite pains and trouble. As pieces of this kind are to be produced only by the closest labour and application, they are necessarily advanced to so great a price that very few can afford to purchase them. Indeed highly finished pictures are seldom to be met with at all. By this new method of drawing and colouring, however, all the finished graces and perfections will be introduced, of which paintings are susceptible. The prices now given for the finished paintings of the

Flemish masters sufficiently evince the value of the copies that are made with such exactness, by the Polygraphic Art. And from this circumstance, the author and patrons and proprietors of this invention, are encouraged to hope for the

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public countenance and protection, as they will produce pictures for a mere trifle, possessed of such a degree of elegance, neatness of execution, and beauty and perfection of colouring and varnishing, as cannot be equaled but by an immensity of labour in a first-rate artist.

Copies of good originals diffused through the country at a cheap rate, will induce many gentlemen to purchase them who never would have thought of going to the price of an original picture; but though beginning with such a trifle, they may imbibe a taste for painting, be induced to enlarge the collection, and by degrees, gain such a taste and knowledge of the art, as not to be content with copies alone; and, as their fortunes may enable them, will be urged on to bespeak originals, of the best masters, and thus become patrons and encouragers of the art. This has generally happened with most gentlemen who have made capital collections of paintings. It has been from a small beginning, perhaps from a single picture, that they have been led to form those collections, which are now the admiration of every person of taste.

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It cannot be concealed, that very considerable sums of money are annually carried out of this kingdom, for the purchase of foreign paintings, both copies and originals, and that in this traffic, some impositions have been made and frauds committed. The invention of Polygraphy evidently tends to remedy these disadvantages and abuses, while, at the same time it does not oppose itself, to the honest industry and ingenuity of the collector and dealer in pictures, who has the same market for copies as usual, and who may be supplied with these by the Polygraphic Society, on the most liberal and advantageous terms.

It is unnecessary to display more fully the utility of the Polygraphic Art. Other advantages besides those that have been here enumerated, will be discovered by time and experience, which not only unfold the mysteries of nature, but, also, new purposes to which these discoveries may be applied.

In the mean time it may be safely affirmed, that the Polygraphic Invention instead of injuring, will promote the art of painting, by encreasing the demand for pictures, by preserving the style and the masterly colouring of the greatest artists in their genuine and natural taste,

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handing them down unimpaired to the latest posterity, displaying their peculiar excellencies, and tracing their analogies to each other. In one word, this invention, may be considered, in every respect, as being *that* to painting, which engraving is to design, and which the art of printing is to that of writing.

The Inventor and Proprietors of the Polygraphic Art, although they have embarked a very large property on the maturation and improvement of this invention, have rejected such offers from the Continent as would at once indemnify their expence,

and bestow a present reward, trusting that the most liberal, as well as the most pleasing recompense for ingeniousness, and patient toil, is to be found where they would wish to find it, not in a foreign, but in their own country; not under an arbitrary, but a free government; and in a land that has exhibited so many examples of ingenious invention, and knows so well how to appreciate improvement in every mechanical and every liberal art. While, therefore, they solicit the patronage of all liberal and cultivated minds in every quarter and kingdom of the world, to their own countrymen they look up with anxious hope, that they will afford that encouragement at home, which the proprietors

of this invention have declined to accept abroad; that they will protect it from the discouraging effects of interested and rash insinuation; that they will not give credit to vague assertions and representations; but that they will honour the specimens they have exhibited of their art with candid attention, so that in the judgment they form, they may be guided not by uncertain reports, but by their own sense and observation.

FINIS.