

*Records of a
vanished craft.*

So completely has wood-engraving been superseded by the modern "process" methods of picture reproduction that we of to-day are apt to forget or overlook the large part played by the graver's tool in the history of popular art. Up to little more than a generation ago, engraving on wood was practically the only method of reproducing an artist's drawing for the purposes of the printing press; wood-engraving was then a flourishing profession, and the engraver was a mighty personage upon whose skill the artist must depend entirely for the impression of his work received by the general public. An interesting realization of this vanished condition may be gained from the volume entitled "The Brothers Dalziel" (Dutton), a record, autobiographic in form, of the work of George and Edward Dalziel, two noted English wood-engravers. For half a century (1840-1890) these brothers, perhaps the leaders of their profession in England, worked in close association with many of the foremost artists of the period, not only in the reproduction of their drawings on the block, but also in the superintendence and publication of elaborate art-books, such as "Dalziel's Arabian Nights" and "Dalziel's Bible Gallery." The last-named collection includes some of the most notable work of what has been called the golden age of English illustration. To its preparation the Dalziels devoted years of patient labor and many thousands of dollars, enlisting the services of such artists as Lord Leighton, Burne-Jones, Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown, and Mr. G. F. Watts. Yet the enterprise was financially almost a complete failure, some two hundred copies being the extent of the sales. Messrs. Dalziel's informal account of their half-century of work is liberally sprinkled with appreciative letters (many reproduced in fac-simile) from the artists whose blocks passed through their hands. There is one from Rossetti, in which he speaks of two engravings (evidently those for the "Moxon" Tennyson) as "now highly satisfactory and well repaying all your pains." It will be recalled that Rossetti's first experience with the Dalziels, in connection with the drawing for Allingham's "The Maid of Elfin-Mere," was one of sore trial for both artist and engraver, and the inspiration for such pleasantries as the following:

"O woodman spare that block,
O gash not anyhow!
It took ten days by clock,
I'd fain protect it now.

Chorus — Wild laughter from Dalziel's workshop."

But, with due allowance for Rossetti's humorous exaggeration, it must be said that his tribulations were owing rather to his own ignorance of the tech-

nical requirements in the case than to any fault of the engravers. That the relations of the Brotherhood with their many exacting clients were generally of the most genial and satisfactory sort there is ample testimony in these pages. Of the thousands of blocks sent out from their workshop, the Messrs. Dalziel have selected the most noteworthy for reproduction in the present volume. There are upwards of 150 plates in all, including specimens of the work of nearly every prominent English artist of the earlier Victorian period who has worked in black-and-white. The collection thus brought together is a remarkable one, which the art-lover should not overlook. We trust the kindly memory of the Brothers Dalziel and their distinguished work may be kept alive for many a day by this handsome volume.