

One of the arts in which the New Zealanders most excel is that of carving in wood. Some of their performances in this way are, no doubt, grotesque enough; but they often display both a taste and ingenuity which, especially when we consider their miserably imperfect tools, it is impossible to behold without admiration. This is one of the arts which, even in civilized countries, does not seem to flourish best in a highly advanced state of society. Even among ourselves, it certainly is not at present cultivated with so much success as it was a century or two ago.

Machinery, the monopolizing power of our age, is not well fitted to the production of striking effects in this particular branch of the arts. Fine carving is displayed, as in the works of Gibbons, by a rich and natural variety, altogether opposed to that faultless and inflexible regularity of operation which is the perfection of a machine. Hence the lathe, with all the miraculous capabilities it has been made to evolve, can never here come into successful competition with the chisel, in so far as the quality and spirit of the performance are concerned; but the former may, nevertheless, drive the latter out of the market, and seems in a great measure to have done so, by the infinitely superior facility and rapidity of its operation. Hence the gradual decay, and almost extinction among us, of this old art, of which former ages have left us so many beautiful specimens. It