

their treatment, seem as if they had been intended for a joke,—or a sarcasm.

The constant recurrence of one hackneyed thought has had the effect of placing before the eye, as it were, the result of a multiplying glass. Britannia rewarding the Four Quarters of the Globe, personified in as many figures habited in the trite and obvious accessories of the respective characters, is the stock idea. In invention there is more than the average amount of poverty which has made the monumental combinations of the Fames and Britannias of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey notorious for meagreness of thought and mediocrity of style. As regards the graphic treatment, the majority of the authors of these designs appear to have been wholly ignorant of the conditions to which such treatment should submit. The conceits which have led to departures from numismatic canons are as absurd as they are numerous. There are some in which the taste architectonic has been applied, and the offered medal shows like a small copy of an interior wall of some Italian palace. In others, most likely of French design, violent contrasts of action and mere picturesque grouping crowd up the circular space and distract the eye. Again, some are so symmetrically contrived that their halves are as correspondent as if the correspondence were obtained by mechanical means. The Etruscan vase or classic illustrations of Flaxman have formed the subjects of paraphrase in others. To others, again, the plan and ordering of the classic shield have been misapplied. Many have been evidently designed with a view to attract from their singular mixture of ornament and human form:—and not a few are little better than burlesques.—Of these, the design which professes to present Elihu Burritt in combination with the Prince of Wales and some other incongruous matters may be quoted as a conspicuous example.

In the artistic treatment of the major part of these models a great mistake may be observed. This is, a high degree of relief, at variance with all previous practice, unsuited to the realization of a purpose one of whose least prominent objects is to secure the mere imitation of matter of fact. The quality of Art to be sought is, we apprehend, such as would make significant forms stand for the expression of ideas, and would subordinate artistic materialism to common sense. The words, so to speak, of such works are not by their emphasis to supersede the value of thoughts. The authors of these designs appear to be for the most part sculptors,—artists who have mis-applied the conditions of their proper arts of *alti* or *bassi rilievi* to the significant abstraction which the medal implies. There are some of the designs in which the high degree of relief detaches whole limbs from the surface,—the impossibility involved in which treatment is too manifest to need comment. There are others of which it may be said that if such realization of the rotund form were brought within smaller compass, it would present masses of limbs and bodies in confusion and perplex the eye. There are few indeed in which the severe, simple, and chaste art proper to the class is presented. Taken altogether, the Exhibition must be regarded as a failure.

Of the few on which we could dwell with any degree of satisfaction No. 34 is one of the best,—and it is so from the acquaintance which its author shows with good examples of this class. Nos. 104 and 105 are also entitled to notice. No. 43 has the merit of good composition. No. 22, though well arranged in many respects, is injured by rectilinear tendencies,—and No. 54, otherwise clever, is marred by conventionalism.