

The conveniences, the comforts, and luxuries conferred on Society by the many important Inventions of the present century, must naturally excite a desire to know the origin and progress of the application of scientific principles, by which such advantages have been gained. Practically considered, those Inventions are of much greater value than the discoveries of Science on which most of them depend; and the scientific inquirer who confines his views to abstract principles, without looking beyond them to the varied methods of their application to useful purposes, may be compared to a traveller who, having toiled arduously to gain the top of a mountain, then shuts his eyes on the prospect that lies before him. To the inquiring youth, more particularly, it is desirable that he should be enabled to satisfy his wish to know by what means such wonders as Steam Navigation, Locomotion on Railways, the Electric Telegraph, and Photography have been gradually developed; and in becoming acquainted with the successive steps by which they have advanced towards their present perfection, he will at the same time learn a useful lesson of perseverance under difficulties, and will have his mind impressed with many valuable scientific truths. The knowledge to be gained by such inquiry is eminently practical, and of a kind which those engaged in any of the pursuits of life can scarcely fail to require. A History of Inventions almost necessarily implies a description of the mechanisms and processes by which they are effected; so far, at least, as to render the principles on which their actions depend understood. It would be impossible, however, in a work of this limited size to enter minutely into explanations of mechanisms, and into the applications of scientific discoveries, which would require a separate treatise for each; but it has been the Authors endeavour to give a succinct, intelligible account, free from technicalities, of the manner in which they operate, so as to be comprehensible to all classes of readers. By thus giving a popular character to the work, to make it acceptable to the young, it is hoped that it will not be found less worthy, on that account, the perusal of those more advanced in life. When Beckman wrote his History of Inventions, towards the close of last century, scarcely any of the wonderful discoveries and contrivances that now form parts of our social system were known; and the table of contents of his two large volumes affords a curious insight to the nature and limited extent of such contrivances as were then considered most important. The introduction into his history of such subjects as canary birds, carp, the adulteration of wine, apothecaries, cock-fighting, and juggling, lead us to infer that the Historian of Inventions at that time must have had some difficulty to find appropriate matter wherewith to fill his volumes. The opposite difficulty now presents itself. The numerous important, wonderful, and curious accomplishments of human skill and ingenuity during the present century render preference perplexing, where so many deserve description. From among the number that press for notice, the Author has endeavoured to select those that are either the most important, the most remarkable, or that seem to possess the germs of future progress; and he trusts that the selection he has made, and the mode in which the subjects have been treated, will render this volume interesting and instructive. CONTENTS The Progress of Invention Steam Navigation Steam Carriages and Railways The Air Engine Photography Dissolving Views The Kaleidoscope The Magic Disc The Diorama The Stereoscope The Electric Telegraph Electro-Magnetic Clocks Electro-Metallurgy Gas Lighting The Electric Light Instantaneous Lights Paper Making Machinery Printing Machines Lithography Aerated Waters Revolvers and Minie Rifles Centrifugal Pumps Tubular Bridges Self-acting Engines, including the Nasmyth Steam Hammer

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