

Emmie. And she had to bear the laughter which followed upon the discovery that she had not heard a word of the proposal.

"Imagine Emmie's ear not being caught by the word 'castles,'" said Dessie. "She must have been enveloped in a tremendously thick fog. I should have expected it to act on her brain like an electric shock."

"Has Emmie a passion for ruins?" asked Harry.

"More than I have," said Dessie. "Castles are all very well in moderation, but really in Germany they are as plentiful as blackberries—and anybody would get tired of too many blackberries."

"That is a splendid specimen of Decima Fitzroy's logical powers," said Mr. Fitzroy. "You might just as well say that too much plum-cake would make Allie ill, and therefore we must be careful how much bread-and-butter she eats."

"Then is the Neckar—what do you call it—a castle?" asked Harry.

"Three castles, not one," said Dessie. "No, four, I mean. But one is said to be inaccessible. I suppose that means that it has a moat round it, and that the Germans have never taken the trouble to throw a plank across. Perhaps they are frightened—imagine it to be inhabited by ghosts and ghostesses. I should like immensely to explore an inaccessible castle."

"You must be an Irishman before you can do that," laughed Harry. "I see you are not much older than you were, Dessie. How do you like German life and manners?"

"The life is well enough," said Dessie; "in fact, we really are just living an English life in Germany. The manners—well, I think I like them too. I always *did* object to the constraint of having to put my knife and fork demurely side by side, and it is quite delicious to be able to stick them out, like the spokes of a wheel, towards the middle of the table—only aunt Laura objects."

"Dessie not being a German by birth," said Mrs. Fitzroy.

"Possibly, if she were, she would object to the constraint of fashion lying in the German direction," said Mr. Fitzroy.

"And you talk German now like a native, of course, Dessie?"

"Yes, just exactly. No, I don't; I'm afraid of wearing out my brains, so I make it a point not to get on too fast. I am rather in the condition of the Englishman—no, I am forgetting; he was a German. But he was in London, and he went into a pastrycook's, and ordered some soup. It was a long while coming, and presently—you know, I suppose, that 'bekommen' means to *have* or to *possess* a thing—well, presently the poor man grew impatient. He remembered the word 'bekommen,' and supposing it to mean the same in English as in German, he exclaimed, 'When *shall* I become a bowl of soup?' The waiter answered, 'Never, sir, I hope.'"

"Your story reminds me of another," said Harry. "A certain gentleman went abroad for a short tour—or it may have been on business—having two or

three young men with him, one of whom professed to be a German scholar, equal to the difficulties of the way. At one of their first halting-places they wished to wash their hands, and as the means for so doing were not visible, the young gentleman was called upon to make known their need. He said something in German, and long delay followed. The waiter at length reappeared carrying two bowls of soup."

"There was an English lady abroad," said Mrs. Fitzroy, "who at the custom-house, when her boxes were being examined, and a small medicine-chest appeared, exclaimed, 'O ce n'est qu'un petit médecin!'"

"O mamma—a little doctor; how ridiculous!" laughed Allie.

Other stories followed, and presently Mr. Fitzroy broke in upon them with, "Well, is it to be Neckarsteinach?"

"O please, yes," cried several voices.

"Then I will order the carriages this evening. No fear about weather, I think. Better to take the more distant excursion while we can, and Harry must see the town and castle another day. If this heat continues we shall soon have some heavy thunderstorms."

"There is lightning every evening," said Dessie. "I saw it last night like little bright needles running all over a great black cloud near the horizon, and blue sky over our heads."

"That must have been more than thirty miles away," pronounced Allie sentimentously. "I know it, because papa told me we could hear thunder up to thirty miles away, and we could see lightning up to—wasn't it?—three hundred miles. And last night we didn't hear a bit of thunder."

"I wonder what a *bit* of thunder may be like?" said Mr. Fitzroy. "By the bye I bargain for one thing, and that is that Miss Bruce accompanies us tomorrow."

"I thought I might perhaps remain at home and study," said Miss Bruce.

"No, I think not this time. You are a little too fond of books. Study of the castles may prove quite as beneficial to you as to the girls."

"The 'girls' don't look greatly in need of relaxation," Harry remarked; and a few minutes later, Dessie having vanished with Allie, Mrs. Fitzroy asked him—

"How do you think Dessie seems?"

"How?" repeated Harry. "Physically or morally, aunt Laura? Both I suppose. She looks well. Just a trifle more tame than at home; yes, certainly, she has the air of being under control, which she never used to have. Perhaps I ought not to say this before Emmie."

"Em is safe," said Mrs. Fitzroy, smiling, but Emmie rose quickly, with an answering smile, and went out of the room.

"I must beg Emmie's pardon; I had no intention of driving her away," said Harry, finding himself too late to stop her. "Some girls repeat things to one another, but Emmie looks discreet."

"Emmie is discreet," said her mother. "Yes, I think Dessie is on the whole improved. She is much more under

control than when she first came. Also she is just now very unhappy."

"Dessie unhappy?"

"You seem to think it impossible. She is very much distressed about poor little Hugh."

"Ah, poor child!" said Harry, with feeling; "I am afraid that is a bad business. But—Dessie—I should certainly have expected it to make some impression on her,—but what am I to think? Look at her high spirits this evening—and Edith writes me word that Ella has never received from Dessie a single line, since she has been told of the child's state."

"I don't think you must quite judge Dessie by ordinary rules. It is a curious nature, but she has a heart, though it is smothered under a good deal of rubbish, and she seems to have a great objection to letting it be seen."

"If you have managed to dig through the rubbish, you have accomplished a feat," said Harry. "But—Dessie unhappy!" and he smiled incredulously.

"Wait!" said Mrs. Fitzroy.

(To be continued.)

## LEATHER WORK.

By DORA HOPE.



AMONGST the thousand-and-one varieties of so-called fancy work, few are prettier or more useful than the subject of these remarks.

It is a pity that leather work is not more commonly practised at the present day, by "our girls" especially, for it re-

quires a very dainty touch and a pretty taste and fancy, and every girl knows that these qualities are common enough amongst them. But, for some reason or another, the making of this style of ornament seems to have almost lost favour during the last few years, and it is hoped that the following simple directions may do something towards the revival of a beautiful art.

It is somewhat difficult to describe in words all the processes of the work to those entirely ignorant on the subject; one practical lesson is worth any amount of written instructions, but still by carefully following them, practice and perseverance will ensure success.

A skin of basil leather is required, and in choosing it a soft, supple one should be selected, as free from flaws as possible. Some pieces of a very thin variety of leather, called skiver, will also be wanted, and an old drawing board, or a similar piece of wood, to work upon. Then a bowl of cold water, one or two soft cloths, gum or glue, and wire must be ready.

The requisite tools with moulds and patterns may be bought at some fancy repositories, but with a sharp pair of scissors, a stiletto, a thimble and a knitting needle, one need not be dependent on the bought moulds, though the latter are more convenient and pleasant in the use.

As to patterns, none are so good as those taken direct from Nature herself. It is a good plan to cut out the exact paper pattern of any pretty leaf one meets with; the name should

be written upon it, and the veins marked in pencil.

The beginner is advised to confine herself to leaves of a simple formation. Amongst the easiest are the ivy, oak, and common polypody fern. When everything is ready, place the

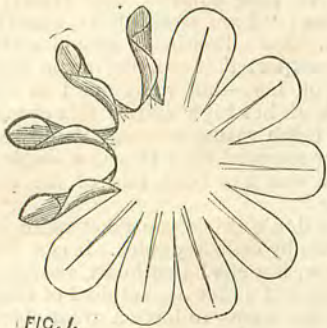


FIG. 1.

paper pattern flat upon the smooth side of the leather, hold it firmly in place with the left hand, and scratch lightly round the outline with the stiletto. Remove the pattern and cut out the traced outline leaf. The scissors must be sharp and sure, for any jags will be very unsightly. Put the leaf into cold water till thoroughly moist, but not too wet. Take it out, and dry it a little in a cloth; lay it flat upon the board, the smooth side of the leather being, of course, always upwards. Now mark the veins upon it with the veiner, or, failing the proper tool, the blunt side of the scissors' point, or a knitting needle.

Next comes the part in which a practical demonstration would be more specially desirable, namely, the moulding. The veins are to be pinched up at the back, with the left finger and thumb, whilst the right hand is smoothing and arranging the right side of the leaf into its natural life-like shape. The midribs are usually better done first, and the smaller veins afterwards. The stalk is rolled tightly together between the finger and thumb till it is tolerably stiff. In moulding, the aim is to get the required effect at once, as too much working injures the face of the leather.

In the polypody fern the midrib is first treated; it runs, of course, the whole length of the leaf. Afterwards, each little pinnae must be done separately. Care must be taken, in process of moulding, that no little filaments of the rough side of the leather should project from the edge, but rather that the right side of the leather should slightly curl over towards the back. Otherwise the edges will have an untidy, ragged appearance.

When the last touches are given the leaf must be put aside, and not touched again till it is perfectly dry. This will not take longer than an hour or so, and, meanwhile, size, or other stiffening, may be prepared. A coating of some sort is necessary, as it preserves, and very much improves, the appearance of the leather. Some persons employ a solution of orange shellac and spirits of wine (in the proportion of half an ounce of the former to a quarter of a pint of the latter, shaken together in a bottle till the gum is melted). This, however, slightly darkens the colour of the leather, so that if the natural colour be desired the size is better. This is prepared for the purpose by adding warm water to it till it has the consistency of thin gum. Whichever is used, it must be brushed well over the surface and edges of the foliage or flowers and into all interstices.

When the beginner has acquired some expertness in the method of working, she will find no lack of more advanced subjects. Every walk in the garden or lanes will suggest fresh designs and ideas to the observant eye. In

making a trail of ivy or bramble, the better plan is to cut it out in one piece—leaves, stalks, and stem. This, of course, requires some skill in the moulding, but when successfully carried out the effect is much better than the same thing done in detachments. To make a branch separately, take a strip of leather, one-third of an inch wide; brush the inside thickly with gum, and roll it over and over on the board with the palms of the hands till it has the form of the rounded stem. The irregularities and excrescences are obtained by pressing and indenting with one of the tools. Tendrils are made of very narrow strips of skiver, wet, and twisted round a knitting needle. This may be dried at the fire, and when pushed off the pin a little tightly-curved tendril will be the result.

Flowers are made usually in several parts, but this of course depends upon the nature of the subject. A dahlia, for example, requires a series of eight or ten circles, of graduated sizes, like fig. 1. These are afterwards moulded as shown in four petals of the same figure, and threaded on a narrow stalk, knotted at the end to prevent their slipping off. The knot is hidden by the full petals of the flower; at the back a calyx, as in Nature, must be added. For stamens and pistils the skiver should be used, cut till it resembles very fine fringe in some cases, but Nature is the best guide in this as so many other branches of the work. Hop flowers, which are exceedingly pretty, are made of a series of five pieces (fig. 2) of graduated sizes, the largest being nearly an inch in diameter. These are moulded with the rounded top of the stiletto, failing the proper tool. They are then strung on a narrow knotted stem, the smallest coming first. If the upper portions are inclined to slip down over the lower, a touch of gum will keep them in their proper place on the stem.

Acorns and nuts are best made by covering small natural specimens with skiver. It must be moistened, pressed over the nut or acorn, and tied tightly round at the base. The bract of the nut is made in the same way as other leaves; and for the acorn cup, press a piece of thin leather over the top of a thimble, tying it over tightly in all directions with thread. When dry, the top edge of the cup will probably require a little trimming with sharp scissors, and the acorns are fixed in with a drop of gum.

There are various moulds for flowers and fruit to be purchased; amongst the former the convolvulus mould is useful and easily managed. For grapes, a leather-covered acorn answers the purpose, but the little point at the top of the acorn must be removed first. The leather is to be tied tightly at the side of the grape; when it is dry the surplus must be cut off quite

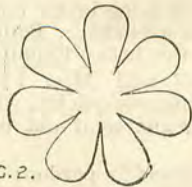


FIG. 2.

close up, and the gathering of leather covered with a tiny patch, gummed on. The stalks are of wire, covered with skiver wound round it, and inserted at the base of the grape with a touch of gum. In arranging the bunch of grapes, care must be taken that

the patched side of each grape be turned inwards out of sight.

It is possible to make fruit moulds for one's own use by taking a hard unripe, but fully formed specimen, and pressing over half of it a piece of gutta-percha which has been immersed in hot water till soft, and then smeared with oil. When it has become hardened again it may be removed, again oiled, and it is ready for use. A piece of rather thin leather is cut to approximately the right size, moistened and pressed gradually into the mould with the tool for the purpose, or, failing that, with the fingers. When dry, and the edges cut off, it should be filled with glue and scraps of leather till it is solid. Then remove it from the mould, prepare the other half in the same way, and join the two halves with glue, carefully rubbing off any irregularities with the end of a tool. Apples, pears, and so on would require two moulds, divided horizontally.

Perhaps the prettiest thing in a small way that can be made of leather work is a bracket, but it is often used for the frames of pictures or mirrors, or, stiched on velvet, for the border of occasional tables. Any carpenter will make one for a foundation of whatever size and shape is preferred, and as a common wood will do, it is very inexpensive. The top and back of the bracket should be covered with velvet or plush, against which the foliage shows up charmingly. For the edges of a bracket or any other article where it would be suitable, a sort of bordering of leather is often useful and always pretty. A great variety of designs

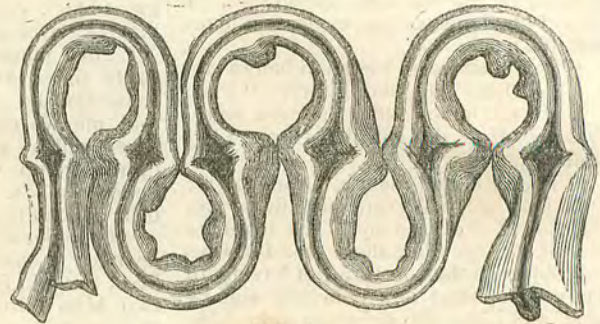


FIG. 3.

may be chosen from for this purpose, but one will serve as a suggestion for the others. This one consists of a strip of leather, as long as the skin will allow, and an inch and a quarter wide. This is moistened thoroughly, and folded together twice, lengthwise; it is then bent into shape and secured upon the board or table with strong pins, the little projections being made by pinching up the leather between the finger and thumb. It must be left pinned in position till perfectly dry, and after being sized it will be ready for use (fig. 3).

In mounting the work, it is well to temporarily secure each leaf in its place with a pin until the grouping is quite satisfactory. Then the pins are removed one by one, and replaced by the tiny headless tacks, which may be bought of a sort of buff colour resembling the leather. In some cases it will be found better to use glue instead of tacks, so both should be at hand. It is necessary, sometimes, to stitch a leaf in place here and there which is stubborn in not taking the right direction on the bracket or other article. For this purpose fine silk of a buff shade should be used.

