

A LOG AND COAL-BOX OR COFFER WITH PANELS DECORATED IN GESSO.



No house in the old days was complete without a linen chest or coffer, and one can sometimes pick up the plain oak ones, similar to the sketch accompanying these notes (minus the decorated panels), for a reasonable sum. I bought an oak one at a sale in a village for 10s., and it cost another 5s. to repair it. Being perfectly plain it was just the article for decoration, and to paint upon the three panels in "gesso" was the very idea. But as these old coffers or chests are not going every day, I had better tell my readers how such an article can be contrived.

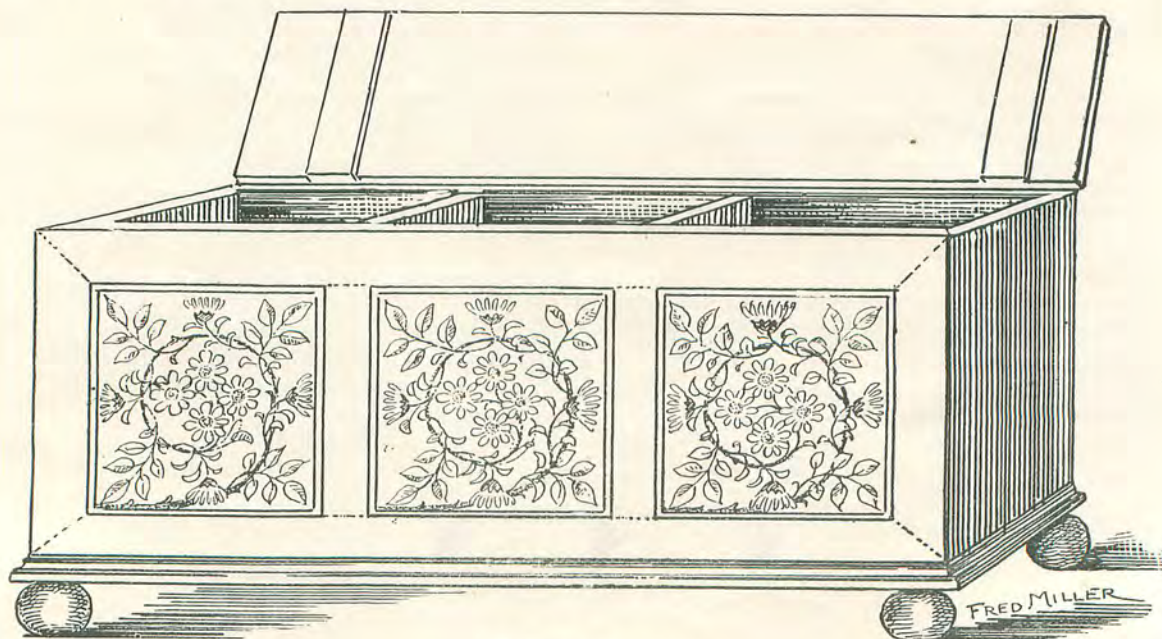
First of all, there is getting the article made either by some amateur carpenter or by a joiner. In this case the chest would be framed together and panelled much as a door is, but we can dismiss this aspect of the case, as no instruction from the writer is needed as to the making of

the chest, and what I shall have to say touching the decoration will come at the end of this article. A good many of us have to contrive and make shift to do our best at a venture, and to those I may be a little helpful. Let us take such an article as I have sketched, which is contrived out of a packing case, whose proportions are not dissimilar to that figured. The effect of panels can be obtained by having some half inch strips of pine glued and screwed on to the side of the box. The joints are indicated by dotted lines. For greater security a few screws could go through the inside of the box into the "stiles," as the portions of a door carrying the panels are termed. If the screws are put through from the front, then the holes should be sunk to receive the heads of the screws, and these holes carefully filled up with coloured putty. The plinth at the bottom of the coffer is contrived out of builders' moulding glued and bradded on to the box.

I am aware it may be urged that this plan of producing the effect of panelling is a sham, to which I reply "Certainly"; but as some of us cannot afford to have a chest made by a joiner, we must do the best we can under our circumstances, and a panelled chest (or what looks like one) is to be preferred to a plain box.

The lid can be strengthened by battens screwed on inside. These must be the length of the width of the inside of the chest, so that the lid can be closed. If the lid is rough it had better be covered with some material, or it might be stained, with the stiles, a dark brown, and afterwards varnished, or polished with beeswax dissolved in warm turpentine, and rubbed on the wood with a piece of flannel. Four turned balls of wood will form the feet, unless we have casters screwed to the bottom, but as a chest such as this is not pushed about a room, I should recommend the turned wood feet as handsomer in appearance.

The chest inside could have three divisions, so that there might be one for coal, one for blocks or billets, and the third for dusters or other odds and ends. I think it would be worth while having a sheet iron movable coal-shoot made so that it could be lifted out to be filled, and when fires are given up the chest could be used for quite other purposes. Economy of space has to be studied in these days of small flats.



A COAL-BOX OR COFFER.

DECORATION OF THE PANELS.

Those who are not art workers could fill the panels with Japanese gilt leather paper. Remnants can often be bought very cheap, or a few yards can be purchased at some decorator's or house-furnisher's. The pieces should be cut just a trifle smaller than the panels, to allow of the paper stretching a little when pasted. The wood should be well sized a day or two before putting on the paper. Very strong paste is necessary; that known as cobbler's paste is the thing. It can be had at a shoemaker's warehouse, and may require thinning with a little boiling water. Put plenty on the Japanese paper, and even apply a second coat half an hour after the first, so that the paper is quite limp before it is laid down. It will then adhere firmly if well rubbed over to get out all air bubbles. The top of the box could also be covered with Japanese paper, especially if the wood is rough. It should be brought over the edges of the lid and carried a little way underneath.

GESSO.

This is a name given to ornamentation in slight relief. It was largely used by the Italians in the sixteenth century, and specimens of furniture and coffers so decorated can be seen in South Kensington Museum. The material composing gesso is plaster of Paris mixed with hot fish-glue, consequently it must be put on while warm, for if gesso becomes solid it cannot be used again. Only mix up, therefore, a little at a time.

The design must be transferred to the wood or other surface to be decorated, and then the gesso can be painted on with large camel-hair brushes, using the gesso in a

"blobby" manner, *i.e.*, the gesso must be allowed almost to drop from the brush. Accidental qualities, which are very pleasant, are thus obtained, some portions of the design receiving more of the gesso than others. By going over the design a second time when the first coat is dry, further relief can be obtained, and it helps the effect to do this here and there.

When the gesso is hard, it can be painted in oil colours mixed with copal varnish. Some pleasant accidental effects can be obtained by putting the colour on and then partially rubbing it off with a soft rag. This gives a natural sort of light and shade. Designs can be stencilled in gesso and then coloured. Such a design as the one given could be treated as a stencil and afterwards touched up by hand.

The panels might be stained or coloured before putting on the gesso. Linoleum or canvas could be stuck on the wood with strong glue paste and then decorated with gesso. In addition to being painted, gesso looks well gilded. If Japanese paper be used, gesso could be used to give prominence to some portions of the pattern, afterwards colouring such portions to harmonise with the colours of the paper.

There is a material sold in tins called "Denoline," which is ready prepared, directions being printed on the tins. Some artists' colourmen and decorators sell it or can procure it. If very considerable relief is required, you soak tow or wool in gesso and stick this on, and when this is hard bring up the surface with another coat of gesso put on with a brush. It does not do to lump gesso on, as it cracks in drying.

In working on an old piece of furniture, see that the wood is well cleaned with soda and water to remove all grease, before commencing your decoration.

A GIRL'S RAMBLES THROUGH HAUNTED SCOTLAND.

BY JAMES AND NANETTE MASON.

PART I.

EDINBURGH LADIES OF BYGONE TIMES.



DEEP attachment to their native land is the characteristic of most Scotchmen and Scotchwomen, and they are credited with being seldom backward in asserting it. To them there is no country like that which, with its Lowlands and Highlands, stretches north of the Tweed away to John o' Groat's, no air like its "caller air," no running water like its burns and streams, and

no people like their "ain folk."

They may remove from Scotland—having their bread buttered on both sides, perhaps, in distant places—but in their heart of hearts it has a corner all to itself for ever. The skirl of an occasional bagpipe is to them the sweetest music, and they feel an emotion not to be put in words at the sight of a stray sprig of heather.

A typical Scot, they say, once in pursuit of fortune, emigrated to Canada. Nothing would satisfy him but to take as part of his baggage a handkerchief full of earth from the field of Bannockburn, and every New Year's night during his long stay in the backwoods of his colonial home he spread the earth on the floor, placed a chair on the earth, and, planting himself in the chair, ate a substantial meal of hotch-potch, haggis, and oatcake, washed down by the national beverage, after which he and his sang Scotch songs and danced reels and strathspeys till morning.

All may not express their devotion to the land of the mountain and the flood in the same manner, but the feeling is never absent, and comes oozing out in the conversation of our northern friends in unexpected ways and in all sorts of unexpected places.

And what wonder? The land is one to be proud of—remarkable for its history, remarkable for the strong character—fresh, original, cautious, level-headed, argumentative, sometimes pugnacious, and always persevering

—of its people, remarkable for its literature, remarkable for the influence it has exerted in the world, an influence out of all proportion to its size and population.

About this land we are now going to write.

We may well call it haunted Scotland in the title. Every place on earth has its ghosts, and the more romantic the incidents that have happened in it, so much the more interesting the crowd of its phantom inhabitants. It goes then without saying that Scotland, with its stirring history, can boast of troops of ghosts of the first quality, to read about whom will furnish not only entertainment, but a good deal of instruction for such girls as have a mind that way.

We propose in this and the following papers to go on pilgrimage through at least a portion of the northern kingdom, speaking of days that are gone, and of people and things that have passed away; and of days and people and things, selecting particularly those that are interesting from a girl's point of view.

There will be no antiquarianism, certainly not. Girls rambling through a picturesque country are not inclined to leave the open air, so fresh and free, for the close atmosphere of an antiquarian museum. There is a place and use for everything, but to the young and bright spirits, who as a rule read the pages of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, dusty details, local interests, dry bones and old stones, would, we know well, prove only an unattractive rigmarole.

Our main object will be to speak of human life, and of all subjects in the world, the most fascinating is people. In the goodly company of our ghosts there will be queens and princesses, famous ladies and eccentric ladies, poetesses and story-writers, bright Scotch lassies, and dear, and sometimes queer, old maids—in fact quite a gallery of notables of all sorts and sizes to illustrate the lights and shadows of bygone days, and the share that women-folk have had in the making of Scottish life and history.

It is right that our wandering feet should make a start with the capital, so old recollections of Edinburgh will form our first subject. Even were it not the capital, it would deserve the first place on account of its beauty.

get so overheated, you will be catching chills next, and I am sure you don't want to be invalided just before the holidays. Come and take your places round the room, and we will ask Lottie to dance her pretty scarf-dance for us, as she looks the only cool member of the party. There's your scarf, dear, in that drawer, and Miss Bruce will play for you. You dance so nicely that it is a pleasure to see it."

Lottie blushed with pleasure at such words of praise, and took her place in the centre of the room with smiling alacrity, and the watchers whispered admiringly to each other as they looked at the dainty, satin-clad figure. Lottie was not really pretty, but she was always so charmingly dressed that she gave the effect of beauty, and to-night in her gala frock she certainly looked her best. She danced gracefully and modestly, waving her chiffon scarf in the air, and moving it to and fro in a manner which looked easy enough, but which was in reality extremely difficult, and required no little effort of strength, so that by the time the dance was finished she was as flushed as her friends, and her breath came in quick, short pants. Poof—how hot she

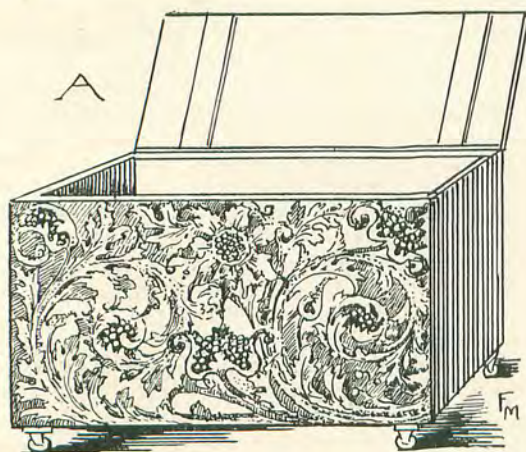
felt, and how tired! It was a relief to give the scarf into Mademoiselle's outstretched hands, and be free to feel for a handkerchief with which to wipe the moisture from her brow. There was a little difficulty in finding her pocket, and the girls watched her fumbles with amused attention. It was a little pause in the evening's entertainment, and for want of something better to do all eyes were fixed upon the figure which stood so prominently in the middle of the room. "Try again!" they cried encouragingly, and Lottie made yet another dive downwards. This time she was successful, for her hand disappeared into her pocket, and presently jerked upwards, bringing with it a small lace handkerchief rolled up into a ball, as if it had lain forgotten since the last time that the dress was worn. She flicked it in the air, and at that something flew out and clattered on the floor near her feet. Mademoiselle stooped to pick it up, and threw up her hands with a cry of dismay. It was a piece of glass, about half-an-inch in size, and in one corner was clearly discernible the end of an engraved letter—the letter "T"!

(To be continued.)

A DECORATED BOX-SEAT OR MUSIC COFFER.

ANY box that is in good condition and fairly stout, so as to ensure strength, can be made into a pretty and useful article, such as is sketched at A. As it is a gain to have it easily movable, for it would do for a children's seat or a foot-stool, castors, to be purchased at an ironmonger's, should be screwed on to the bottom. If the box is somewhat rough, then it might be covered with Japanese gilt leather paper. Strong glue-paste, *i.e.*, paste to which a little melted glue has been added, should be used, and it must be put on freely, so that the paper is quite moist when it is laid on to the wood to ensure it adhering.

If the wood is in good condition, it could be decorated

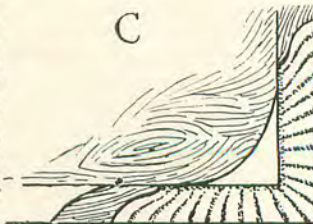
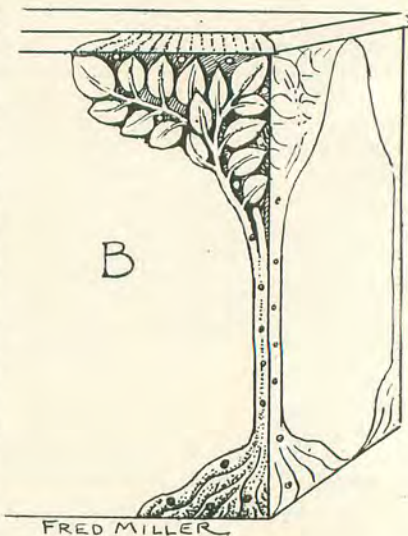


with gesso (see No. 1142 of the "G. O. P."). In sketch A will be seen an all over design, and in D a portion of the pattern enlarged, so that my readers can see the class of design used. This rich foliated ornament lends itself well to being wrought in gesso as the pattern is greatly helped by being in relief. Thus in the flower we can raise some parts—the edge of the petals, the portions that turn back connecting each petal, and the stamens in the centre—by going over them a second time, or allowing the gesso to flow or thicken here, while we leave other parts almost flat by only putting on a thin coating of the

Before putting on the gesso, have the design transferred to the wood, so that you work away without hindrance or hesitation, for it is important that the gesso be allowed to flow on freely while it is hot. You can manipulate it with the brush when it is on the wood before it begins to set, but when this happens nothing can be done except tooling it up with steel scrapers after the gesso is hard. When the first coat is hard, you can go

over some portions a second time, but try to get as much of the effect as possible with the first application of the gesso, for accidental effects are thus obtained which are often far more pleasing than where everything is done with careful deliberation.

In colouring the gesso use transparent oil colours as much as possible, such as raw sienna, burnt sienna, Prussian blue, gamboge, madder, etc., mixed with copal varnish. A friend who has had much experience in gesso told me that he found putting the colour on and then partially rubbing it off yielded very happy results, as the colour rested in the hollows and was wiped off in the raised parts. The wood itself could be stained some dark colour, or you could use a mixture of burnt sienna and Prussian blue mixed with copal. This only applies to deal or rough



wood. For decorating oak or any good wood, it would be a sin to paint it.

The coloring of gesso should be done in some such way as I have hinted at, that is, by partially rubbing off the colour, so that the gesso itself does much of the work. It is no use using gesso if the value and character such a material gives one's design is lost in the colouring. Those who care to could try putting on a little gold leaf in places.

Gilding a flat surface is a much more difficult operation, for the gold leaf is apt to blow away or curl up when taken from the book. The sheets of gold leaf require cutting up into strips. Gilders turn out the gold leaf on to a pad of leather, and cut the sheets of gold up with a long narrow knife sold for the purpose. A wall of cardboard should be around three sides of the pad, as this prevents the gold from being blown away.

For the sake of those who prefer working in metal I have



The gesso should be touched where the gold is to come with gold size, sold by gilders and frame-makers, some time beforehand, for the size must be nearly dry before the gold leaf is applied. The gold leaf, which is to be purchased in books, is taken up with a "tip" or flat brush, and just put on the portions sized. Gilders pass the tip over their hair, which is kept oiled, before taking up the gold leaf. A little practice would soon enable an amateur to gild gesso, as it does not greatly matter how much goes

shown how beaten copper mounts can be fixed on the box. The lid could have simple ornamental corners as shown at C.

By the way, the design B could be carried out in gesso with a little adaptation.

When the colour applied to the gesso is quite hard, the whole can be varnished with some good hard drying varnish.

FRED MILLER.

VARIETIES.

RIVAL MUSICIANS.

The powers of the great Handel as an organist and harpsichord player were only second to his strength as a composer. The mastery which he displayed over the largest instruments, the command of the pedals, his splendid execution, left him for many years of his life unrivalled.

Even at the age of twenty-one he found but one man in Italy worthy to be called his rival. This was Scarlatti; and when "the dear Saxon," as the Venetians named Handel, visited their city, much excitement was caused by the friendly competition between the two players. In the end the Venetians awarded to Scarlatti the palm for playing the harpsichord, but decided that Handel was far his superior in organ-playing.

This rivalry, happily, was thoroughly amicable; indeed, on the part of Scarlatti it resulted in a genuine feeling of regard and admiration, and he never spoke of Handel but with the greatest respect.

DON'T PUT IT OFF.

"Friends, in this world of hurry
And work and sudden end,
If a thought comes quick of doin'
A kindness to a friend,

Do it that very minute. Don't put it off! Don't wait!
What's the use of doing a kindness, if you do it a day
too late?"

THE PARTRIDGE IN THE TEA-KETTLE.

A party were out shooting in the autumn of last year. A retriever was sent after a winged partridge, which had run into a ditch. The dog followed it some way down the ditch, and presently came out with an old rusty tea-kettle held in its mouth by the handle. The kettle was taken from the dog amid much laughter. Then it was found that inside the kettle was the partridge.

The explanation was that the bird, when wounded, ran into the ditch, which was narrow. In the ditch was the old kettle with no lid on. Into this the bird crept, and, as the dog could not get the bird out, it very properly and sensibly brought out the kettle with the bird in it.

MARRIED IN HASTE.—An American engine-driver, who could not get leave of absence for his marriage, arranged with his bride to be in waiting with a minister at a junction where the train had to stop for four minutes. The two were there ready, and the engineer jumped off, had the knot tied, jumped on again, and resumed his journey.

A DANGEROUS TIME.—"The most dangerous interval of human life," says Rousseau, "is that from birth to the age of twelve years. It is the time when errors and vices germinate."

FIGURES OF SPEECH.—An eminent politician, in a vigorous oration against the Government policy, is reported to have said that "they keep cutting the wool off the sheep that lays the golden eggs till they pump it dry."