To adorn a distinctly useful object and fittingly decorate some common thing of everyday life, has been rightly deemed a worthy aim in the art of decorative work. Wherever in the East or the West, a hand that is skilled in the use of flowers, or mosaics, or the art of embroidery, or painting, or the making of some useful thing, and betrays the love of ornamental forms in their common domestic implements and clothing; it is the — the adornment of the useful thing, and thereby gives to the useful a charm, a beauty, and an interest for itself and for the eye. This is a true art, and one which, like the art of the craftsman who makes the furnishing articles for the home, is a work of the hands, and therefore of the heart.

A Greek amphora of common earthenware has no artistic beauty of its own, while even in savage countries the crockery art they know is at least a decoration of their daily food, and one which is always a decoration of the vessel itself, and one which is also a decoration of the display, and which is, or may be, a decoration of the table. A properly chosen and placed amphora is one that was meant to stand on a table where it is seen and admired, and which is intended to add to the beauty of the room and of the food that is served upon it. It is a decoration of the useful thing, and therefore of the eye, and of the heart.

Better far to make half a dozen common cups, and to put them on a shelf where nobody has seen them, than to have a dozen plain cups, but of better material, and with a decoration which is beautiful in itself, and is designed to add to the beauty of the cup itself. The designer of a cup should have a heart as well as a mind, and should be a man of both.

This is an off-printed lesson, yet today it is as useful as at any time, and quite to the point of this gossipy discourse. If we crow our drawing-rooms with cups and saucers, and leave the useful objects on a shelf where nobody has seen them, and use them for the dinner-party, and for the daily use, and for the decoration of the table, then we are wasting our time and our money, and are not making the most of what we have.

The making of portfolios and blotting-books is not an abstruse one. Bookbinding has become a popular pastime, even in the rural households; hence to highly-skilled amateurs the description in minute detail of the method to make such a simple example of the craft may be as absurd as instructing a pupil fresh from the highest school course of cookery lessons to make a place of toast. Let bookbinding, done completely and well, demands not alone a certain amount of technical skill, but a good many important considerations not required for this elementary case-making.

Given paste and paper, cardboard and leather, or some substitute for it, and anyone can make a portfolio. With a napkin press it is not necessary to use substitute paper; and although it is a little dexterous, or two or three boiled potatoes, a tablespoonful of flour, pepper, and salt; stir and let all brown a little, then add some broth, and the chopped meat; then cook slowly for about twenty minutes, then serve with a bit of potatoes or omelette.

Another Mixture.—Take some cold mutton, remove the skin and fat, and chop it; chop an onion very small, cook it in butter until it is golden; add salt, pepper, and then stir for a minute, add a little stock, stir, and boil five minutes; add the meat, let it get very hot without boiling, season with nutmeg, pepper, and salt, and serve with finely-chopped parsley on the top, and quarters of hard-boiled eggs round.

Off our main purpose, it may be as well to suggest one which is highly for many things besides portfolios. A mixture of a few common bricks packed up in crape, just as you would neatly wrap a brown paper parcel, but the crape is stitched after being so folded; then a wide tape is stitched on the binding, leaving a little of the crape itself visible. A few of these placed upon a board are very useful for any purpose where a press is required. Even one brick so covered, with a pair of boards, covered over to match, is handy in a bedroom to put upon gloves, ribbons, or lace, and take out the creases. These bricks can be made into very tasteful objects for inexpensive gifts, and a real substitute for boxes, where any useful novelty is welcomed by avidity.

But to return to the subject, and enumerate the merits of the pasted portfolio. It is, of course, preferable to some form, as the common mill-board sold in large sheets from twopenny to fourpence. This is less easy to cut than ordinary pasteboard, but much better to work upon, as its inherent stiffness is greatly increased by the added paper, and the tendency to warp, a property of all pasteboard, is hardly noticeable in this instance. The most delightful feature of the mangle bookbinders' paste is best, but the official paste, or stickplast sold in bottles, answers equally well. As, however, the former is the most expensive in any quantity, it will be best to give the recipe for its preparation. Stir two tablespoons of flour into half a pint of cold water until it forms a thick paste, thengradually, stirring all the time, boiling in water in which a teaspoonful of alum has been previously dissolved; pour the whole back into the saucepan, and boil until it thickens to a paste. This will keep sweet and wholesome for several weeks, especially if a drop or two of oil of cloves has been added to the boiling water.

For the back of the portfolio leather is undoubtedly the best material. The use would be to compress too closely upon the art of bookbinding, and exact a higher amount of skill and more elaborate touch than this paper seems to warrant. For bookbinders' cloth is naturally brought to mind, but personally I dislike it, both to use, and for its appearance after. It requires to imbibe certain tinctures, but so well enough to deceive a baby; thus it is worse than a crime, it is a blunder. American cloth is clumsy and hideous, but very strong. On the other hand, nothing is better than crape, when it is used over the material for the joint itself. For the joint while ticket backsm is far and away the best, and for dainty purposes the white surface is very pretty, and can be decorated by
etching or other painted device. It is peculiarly easy to manage, it pastes quickly, does not shrink or stretch to any noticeable extent, dries firmly with a good substance, helping to keep the shape of the back, and is not costly—elegant enough to temper a yard, double with.

Deferring for a while the actual manipulation, I wish to speak particularly of the decorative aspect of the finished book, and of a few trims not generally employed as covering to portfolios and blotting-books.

Only those who have tried them know how gorgeous an effect the gold tasselled brocades sold at Liberty's, and kindred stuffs, yield when pasted on book-covers. They cost two shillings to five shillings a yard, but a third of a yard suffices for a good-sized blotting-book, and about a half-yard will suffice for a music-folio. If they are rather expensive they repay their cost, and raise the portfolio to the level of a beautiful object, while in no way detracting from its use.

An adequate substitute for these brocades may be found in cretonne and printed cotton fabrics. If a good pattern is chosen, and the strings wherein it is tied be of a colour that harmonizes, the effect is only less good than the brocade.

There is more method than madness in the advice to use these materials. To keep various groups of music sorted, easily at hand for reference when required, the distinctive colour and design of each covered portfolio assists the search for more than a label on the cover, which is only visible when the whole case is uppermost in a pile. Here is a pile near me. Moskowki in red and white, Bach in a sombre green, Schubert in blue and white, modern songs in a pink flowered pattern, gavottes, minuets, and kindred pieces in a red and black cover. These colours are merely named at haphazard. A very soulful person might symbolise the hidden meaning of each tone-poem by an emblematic colour, but as I cannot fathom the esoteric mystery of such transcendental analysis, the hint must suffice.

The Japa vese gold leather wall paper, to be purchased in small quantities at Hindley's, Oxford Street, is excellent for this use, being of a increased popularity of this home industry must be allowed.

Now for practical construction. Having chosen the size of the case to be made, cut the required pieces from a sheet of millboard in this fashion: Take a T square and mark upon the board to be cut pencil lines at the proper place, at right angles to the edge of the board, hence the use of T square. Take a straight flat ruler, hold close to the pencil line, and pressed there very firmly with the left hand. With a very sharp penknife draw lightly down the line, and then in successive cuts, given smoothly with a firm, sustained pressure, cut until the piece is detached. As surplus cuts are a very bad job, be sure to result (not on fingers if care is taken to keep each hand very firm), it is as well to choose someone else's best dining table for the operation; or to place at a very thick piece of board upon one's own.

If the material is to cover the whole surface of the covers, it will be best in most cases to apply it over the buckram or cloth back, for ease in working and increased strength; so that the half-bound style, as it is called, will be enough to explain these. Here is a corner piece

are needed, as they are in the true half binding, and are not if it is merely a foundation for after clothings, fix them as indicated in fig. 1, the first thing, while the boards are separate. Then cut out the piece of buckram or cloth for the back about an inch and a half wider than the needed thickness of the case each way, and an inch larger. Have ready a similar strip slightly shorter than the case, and not so wide as the other, to line the back. Paste the back piece and lay it on the table; then place the boards (as shown in fig. 1) down upon the back, turning over the top and bottom part, and then lining the back. See that the back piece is smooth before lining it, rubbing it, not directly with a brush, but laying a smooth, stout piece of paper over the pasted material and then rubbing it heavily with a cloth. In adding the lining to the back, see that it fills the depression between the covers, and work in close to the edge of the boards with a bone paper knife, so that it makes a shallow wide groove.

Prepare beforehand marble paper, or any material chosen for the sides, cut as in fig. 2. These should be pasted in place, and the strings added as in fig. 3, before the lining paper is pasted on.

To insert the strings, cut a slit through the cover about an inch from its edge; pass the ribbon through, leaving an inch to paste down inside. Then the lining paper, cut a shade smaller than the cover each way, will secure the ties firmly.

These processes should follow each other as soon as practicable to avoid warping; but if the cover is to be of cretonne or other texture, let the back and its lining piece dry before applying the outside covering. The shape for this is indicated by fig. 4, which shows the way to use the material for the whole, without the buckram back piece.

If each of these parts is done well, the whole is well done, and finished in hardly longer time than it takes to write the directions.

For blotting-book binding, a strip of ribbon or elastic should be sewn in the fold of the case, under which to pass the paper.

A pretty addition to the book is shown in fig. 5, where a wider ribbon passes in and out through two slits in the cover, and ties the whole; this is very effective with brocades,
cretonnes, or the Japanese gold leather papers.

The idea is originally, I believe, Japanese, and used in French brocages de face, but practically unknown in England.

A pleasant variation from the orthodox shape of the blotting-book, made from half sheets folded across, is gained by cutting the whole sheets once across; this yields an oblong page, which in most handbooks is round rather than the usual size, and in every way equally serviceable.

A few hints may be added. See that your covers have the corners with their proper part outside before pasting on the back. Remember that the holding powers of the case are determined by the space left at the back between the boards, and measure accordingly. Be careful in laying sizes of paper to paste it on parallel to the back of the case, and exposing equal parts of each corner. Paste the cloth for the back and corners a minute before use, to allow the adhesive matter to sink into the material, giving a second coat if needed just before application.

Place the case flat under weights as soon as it is finished; if you wish the back to be unwrinkled, lay a narrow slip of cardboard inside the back, otherwise the thicker covers will prevent it from having any of the applied pressure.

The Liberty brocades, for some purposes, are improved by a lining of silk. As this material is hard to paste, and impossible to apply to other textures, while the raw edge is unsightly, cut a piece of paper the needed size, stretch the silk over, pasting only the turned-over edge; put it under pressure, and when quite dry mount it inside the covers with a thin line of collageine or mord-à-mord round the edge.

To add flaps is difficult to describe, unless you think of each flap as merely another case with another back-piece—then the mystery is clear, for having made two covers into one, it is as easy to add any number in the same way.

For small folios, vegetable parchment is a pretty after-covering; as this will not take paste well, cut it and crease it over, fastening only with the lining paper, and using adhesive matter on the edge of that only, so as to avoid "cockling."

If embroidery is used, the contents of the folio, or initials of its owner, may be worked on the side. But if brocade or cretonne be used, the wide ribbon shown in fig. 5 may be embroidered with letters; in this case make four slits on the top cover, as shown in fig. 6.

Real embroidery or crewel work would give scope for much dainty design, but there is no space left to suggest any details. I mind me of a book in the studio of a certain painter, clad in old ecclesiastical brocades: and this regal specimen offers a splendid reward to those who are brave enough to undertake such coverings; but having named this king of book-coverings, no matter things must be said, but the gossip abruptly ended, with a sincere hope that my explanation is clearly set forth, and that many will reap pleasure from the pursuit here set forth.


CHAPTER III.

In an incredibly short time Olive Woodford found herself installed as nurse and housekeeper pro tempore at the Manor House. She could hardly tell how it came to pass, but from the first moment of her entrance into the sick room her uncle took her to his heart. Perhaps her wandering memory recalled the old days when he and her sister were happy children together, and so gave the younger Olive her place in his imagination. Perhaps it was that Olive's gentle ways and nursing skill, acquired at ambulance lectures and by practical experience also, were doubly soothing, because Squire Dale had so long been unused to feminine tendance. At any rate he was as doting as a child in her hands; and though he could at first speak but little, he followed her about with loving gaze wherever her dainty figure in its white apron fitted to and fro.

The coachman's wife, a sensible, practical body, came to divide the night work with Roger, and Olive spent all her days in the sick chamber. The poor Squire had a horror of professional nurses, due chiefly to sheer ignorance of anything but the Mrs. Camp and Betsy Prig type as portrayed in "Martin Chuzzlewit."

Olive was glad, as his dread was unreasoning, that she could save him from the necessity of having such aid. At one time his life was in danger, but he was at length pronounced convalescent.

"You cannot think what difficulty I had to get proper beef tea," said Olive to Blanche, as the sisters strolled on the Manor House Lawn one bright October morning.

"The cook wanted to put in the beef just as it came from the butcher's, and boil it all up over a smoky fire. I had the greatest difficulty in getting her to cut the meat small and put it in a jar, and she would not believe a little water more or less made any odds."

"I wonder she let you teach her," observed Blanche.

"It needed the utmost care; but she is a good-hearted girl, after all," replied her sister.

"You find most people good-hearted, Olive, because you know how to approach them," said Blanche. "How do you get on with Touchstone?"

"I think the question is, How do you get on with him, Blanche?" said Olive, looking with a smile at her sister's face. "He seems to find it necessary to spend a great deal of time at Miller's."

"A CHEERFUL GLOW BEAMED FORTH INTO THE DARKNESS."