HOME TRADES.

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FRAME-MAKING.

The art of making and gilding picture frames has never been much overlooked by women hitherto, though it is a branch of industry which might be easily accommodated by them, and without leaving the threshold of home. Of course, a plane may not appear either agreeable, or very practicable to many amongst them; but we do not expect to find pupils in such a large number. If the work be quite beyond the powers of many of our sex, we maintain it is certain that there is no want of a considerable proportion of men also, unable to execute a well-constructed, and neatly-finished article, of handwork of any description, even if it were to save their lives!

The first consideration most naturally be given to the amount of expenditure essential to the carrying on of the work. Fortunately, a good deal of labour and time is saved in frame-making, in consequence of the facility of procuring strips of every variety of prepared mouldings, and even ready gilt, if desired. These may be purchased in any lengths required and suitable for making gold frames, from the handsomely "Alhambra," down to the simplest "bead." There are also ornamental mouldings in the form of stars, roses and other devices to be purchased in quantities, made of some kind of composition, which may be attached to the corners or sides of flat frames, not otherwise decorated. Ovals are to be procured ready made, and nothing remains to be done save frame the mouldings sold for picture-frames, the rabats at the inner side, into which the painting and glass are to be inserted, will be found ready prepared.

The trade of the carver and gilder naturally divides itself into two departments, as the name itself implies; and thus renders a double set of implements and materials essential at the very outset. A work-shop, also, must be found in some part of the house in which the work may be carried on, otherwise the work is not likely to be as correct and neat as it should be. The materials may be bought at the wholesale drapers or from the manufacturer, and the work may be done at home, in a moderate degree of noise or quiet, as the case may be, according to the nature of the work.
Were further expense no serious object, and an iron nail might be added to this list—as doing the work more quickly, and perhaps more accurately than by using the vice—the cost of which will amount to two pounds. The cutter, block and shoot are inexpensive, and can be made by any carpenter. They are made of wood only, and are employed in the work. The try-plane is a large and heavy instrument, but as it is laid always resting upon its side on the mitre-shoot, the weight will not prove a source of difficulty to a woman’s hand and wrist.

Before entering into any details of the work I will give an outline of the whole, further particulars regarding each separate branch of the work being given in its proper order of succession—

1. Mark and saw the mouldings into appropriate lengths in the mitre-block.
2. Finish ends in mitre-shoot (or machine).
3. Put together in vice.
4. Stop holes.
5. Rub down with emery paper.
6. Apply you own paper clay.
7. Rub down when dry.
8. Apply two coats of size.
10. Wash with size.
11. Apply weak size.
12. Lay on gold leaf with water.
13. Lay on a second size.
14. When dry rub off with waxing.
15. Apply two coats of size.

Having selected the moulding, first measure the lengths required for the uprights and horizontals of the frame, and mark them at the short ends of the mitred cuttings respectively. These lengths being determined, saw the length of the moulding and lay it on the foot of the mitre-board, so adjusting the mark upon it as to correspond with the diagonal division through the entire length of the piece. Into this aperture the saw should be introduced, which will guide it in the severance of the moulding at such an angle as will form a good corner, when the piece is being joined. Having sawn out the four lengths, you next transfer each successively to the mitre-shoot. This instrument has likewise a projecting foot, but at one side, not facing its employer like the implement before-named. On this foot the plane is laid, with the iron cutter on one side, facing inwards. Sharpen it well on the oilstone, and then seize it by means of its wedge in the plane; but not too tightly, so as to preclude its adjustment—which is a delicate matter—as the edge must only be just visible, protruding from the surface of the board. When looking along it from one end to the other, held closely to the eye. To make it fall very exactly into the right position strike the upper end of the cutter smartly with the hammer; and when quite true, secure it firmly by striking in the wedge. The shoot has a triangular figure of wood on the top, forming the points of two flat planes, or bars of wood, placed like a chevron, or two sides of a triangle, with a section of the same depth as the shoot, with the raised board to which it is affixed. Against the nearest side of this triangle lay the moulding, adjusting the mitred end towards the plane; hold it firmly with your right hand, and plane with the left. The shoot will have to be turned round for the planing of the opposite ends of all the four mouldings respectively, and the plane carefully, and examine the ends of the mouldings while working with the plane, to see that the cutting be sharp and clean. If the mitre be not true, and the cutter may be too thick for the width of the wood, it may be frayed, or even split up at the edges.

Having well finished the mitring and proved that they will fit together truly with their respective felloes, take one of the long lengths and secure it in the vice, facing upwards; then take a short one and lay it up against the end, so as to form a sharp angle for the corner, or, if you prefer, the edge of one of the ends of the second, or short, half of the chamfered end project in the least possible degree beyond the first, to allow for the hammering in of the brass, if there be two holes for the brass, directing the awl, so as to go through the thickest part of the wood. Then hammer in well, but carefully. The brass should be two and a half-inch ones, for two-inch mouldings.

The frame being put together, the gliding is next to be considered. The appliances required for the purpose must all be enumerated. For oil gliding—pipe clay, size, and chrome-yellow mixed; gold-leaf books, from is. 3d. upwards to the treble gold; tips for gliding; brushes, with short flat handles; "skewering" brushes; white, hard spirit varnish; mat-gold size; emery paper; ornacl (in solution); burnish stick; rub size; gold knives; gold varnish; for cutting round; round bristle and thick camel's-hair brushes; parchment and cotton wool.

Gold books contain twenty-five leaves, each about three inches square; they are counted by the hundred, not by the books. There are many different tones of colour in the gold. The cushion is generally made of cotton wool. It only consists of a small square, like an ordinary pins cushion, made of wood, covered with satin; and, secondly, with chamois or buff leather very tenuity sewn over it. At one end there should be a little screen, made of a double piece of parchment, sloping down at each side round the corners, which may be either nailed, tacked or laced together. This barrier secures the gold-leaf from being blown away. This cushion should have some little straps attached to it underneath, one at each side through which will run the left hand and the knife. Mat-gold size is composed of one part yellow ochre, two of copal varnish, three of linseed oil, four of turpentine, and one of white whiting over the whole mixture. The ochre must be previously ground to the finest powder, together with a small quantity of oil, before being blended with the other materials.

When the frame has been put together, it must be "stopped"; that is, all the crevices, and the holes where the brasses have been driven in, must be filled in with a stiff compound of whiting and size. Then rub down the whole surface of the frame carefully with emery paper, rather fine in quality. At this stage of the work it must be decided whether the whole of the framework, or a portion of it, shall be burnished. If the former, it will have the appearance of dead gold, and cannot be burnished. Thus, the dull and bright portions of a frame, if both be united, must be worked in a manner dissimilar the one from the other. Oil gold may bear being carefully washed, treatment which the burnished can never be submitted.

We will suppose that the frame has been rubbed down for oil-gliding. Give it now a coat of chrome-yellow mixed, or chrome-yellow mixture, which is of the consistency of paste, and which must be painted on it when boiling, but very smoothly and thinly. When dry, brush size all over it, to prevent its soaking in; and then again polish with the emery paper. Two coats of size must now be applied, and then put on the oil gold size over-night, so that it will dry. The requisite size and gold leaf may be bought in a pot ready-made. It will take about twelve hours to dry sufficiently, and when slightly tacky, it will be ready for the laying on of the gold.

It is now time that you should collect your gliding materials and tools around you—the cushion, gold-books, gold knife, tip, a can of water, and two or three camel's-hair brushes of different sizes. Take the cushion in the left hand, together with the gold book, and having calculated the number of "lays" (or layers of gold) required to cover the width and length of frame, raise a leaf out of the book by means of the tip—which you must lightly brush over your hand, to give it the very smoothest appearance. You now place it on the wet spot prepared for it. This will need carefulness, as it must not be put away. Blow forcibly upon it to dispense any superfluity of water from it, and lastly, press it closely down with a camel's hair brush. When the next lay is to be placed in position, wet the extreme end of the last, which you are touching the red end of the next, and let each successive lay overlap the edge of its predecessor, letting the water flow over it, but carefully guarding against any breakage of the delicate edge of it. If the overlapping extend about the eighth of an inch it will be sufficient. When the whole is completely covered with gold, stand it aside to dry.

So soon as the frame be dry, then be considered one, having a more or less elaborate design, some portions suitable for burnishing will be in bold relief, and some in low—the latter occupying the sunken spaces edged with the major parts of the design. To make the gold adhere to these in every little crevice, you must take the large round brush intended for this purpose, and, working from the middle to the end, and lastly from the end to the middle in a manner which could not be accomplished by any other method. This done, mix about six drops of ornacl in a teaspoon of size, and brush over it with a camel's hair brush.

The portions of the design which require to be burnished must now be prepared. Give them two or three coats of burnish size, and then add any scraps of gold leaf where the gliding has been deficient, wetting these spots with water a little beyond their respective margins, as before directed, to make the leaf adherent. Then take a piece of cotton wool, and with a very light touch brush off all loose ends and particles of gold that may cling about the smooth surface. When quite dry, take a camel's hair brush, in a manner differing size and shape respectively, and rub carefully and steadily up and down, and over the portions to be burnished, in a manner which cannot be accomplished by any other method. This done, mix about six drops of ornacl in a teaspoon of size, and brush over it with a camel's hair brush.

Supposing that you have a frame requiring to be reglued, you must first wash it with a sponge dipped in clean water, and when dry put on a coat of size and the requisite burnishing. These two processes can never be sufficiently accomplished, apply either yellow gold lacquer, or white hard spirit varnish, and then colour the back of the frame with black. This done, suppose that you have a frame requiring to be reglued, you must first wash it with a sponge dipped in clean water, and when dry put on a coat of size and the requisite burnishing. These two processes can never be sufficiently accomplished.
give a second coat, and when ready rub down with fine sand or emery paper. Then lay on the gold leaf, and stand by for a time to dry more thoroughly, on its edge. When quite firm, dip a fine brush into water, and brush the gold ever lightly with it, to remove any loose particles, and if any spots appear to have any deficiency of gold, lay on what is needful, and then give the whole a coat of the clear parchment size; painting the back of the frame with ochre.

Before concluding I may add a few words on the cleaning of gilt frames. Many a frame has been subjected to the most destructive treatment at the hands of the housemaid, who in washing off fly-nests, has removed all the gilding with them. Damp a small sponge with hot spirits of wine, or turpentine, and having lightly wiped the gilding with it, leave it to dry. If bruised, gilding dust it with a brush of badger’s hair, dip the sponge in gin and water, and pass it very lightly over the surface, drying the gold by mopping it with a silk handkerchief, after which apply the varnish before-named.

S. F. A. CAUFIELD.

THAT AGGRAVATING SCHOOL GIRL.

By the Author of "Wild Kathleen."

CHAPTER X.

"PLEASE GIVE ME A REWARD."

It was a rule at Crofton House that the twenty minutes before the dinner hour should be relaxation time. The girls might spend that little space exactly as they pleased, even in doing absolutely nothing, if they so chose. But there was one privilege especially attached to those twenty minutes which had as much as anything to do with the happy atmosphere usually prevailing in the establishment.

From ten minutes past one until the half-hour the Principal was always quietly seated in her arm-chair in her own study—in the winter beside the fire, in the summer beside the window looking through the wide French glass doors into the garden. And neither anyone of the inmates of her home was welcome to come, from the senior English governess, the next in authority to herself in the house, down to the shock-headed little lad who cooed the gravel-paths and cleaned the boots.

Anyone who was in trouble, perplexity, difficulty, or even disgrace, might claim a hearing from the chief during those invaluable twenty minutes. If two happened to come together, it was established that the younger, and presumably the weaker, had first attention. But, as a rule, the wheels of the establishment ran so smoothly that very frequently for weeks together Miss Crofton would have her twenty minutes as an uninterrupted breathing interval for herself. The privilege had been made more use of since Miss Edison’s arrival than the schoolmistress ever remembered to have been the case during a similar period since its first establishment the year after she set up her school.

To tell the truth, Miss Nellie very much enjoyed a quiet chat with Miss Crofton, for whom her liking was as great as her dislike for Miss Rowe, and she seized every excuse to plead admission during the holiday minutes to the sanctuary. Then Miss Rowe had several times claimed an audience to complain of her headstrong pupil, and once Milly Wilmot’s rosy, round face had made its appearance, all tear-stained and piteous, to beg off a punishment which she had incurred through following the mischievous Nellie’s leadership. Altogether the patient, hard-worked Principal had begun to regard herself to the expectation of daily visitors, and was accordingly the less disappointed when, soon after she had left little Rose quietly sleeping away some of the effects of her tumble, a tap came to the study door, and was followed by the appearance of Helen Edison’s curly dark head. The eyes beneath the curls were not quite so brave as usual in their glances, and the two little slim white hands hung down in front with a copy-book between them. “Come in,” said the Principal. But her voice was very quiet, even stern, in its gravity. Miss Crofton was having a good deal of trouble with this wilful, indulged, only child, and the half-understood matter of the pretended scratch and interruption of one of the master’s classes had much annoyed her. She was not disposed to greet her pupil’s interruption of her quietude with her usual genial greetings and friendly welcome. However, Helen did not expect smiles just then, so she was not disappointed. She obeyed the “Come in” meekly, and as the schoolmistress looked at the girl’s fine expressive, earnest face, she began to set a pardon before it was asked.

“I am very sorry I vexed you, madam, by laughing in the class to-day,” began Helen, demurely; “but—but—he did look so—funny.” And then that mischievous crimson mouth began to unbend and curls into laughter—that laughter which nearly everyone found themselves utterly unable to withstand.

Miss Crofton made a vigorous effort at self-control as she said—“My dear child, you had no right to excrete Professor Smith into agitation. You had no right at all, as you well know, to allude to any matters whilst with him outside such as were connected with your studies. How you came to forget yourself so far I cannot understand.”

“It was owing to that,” replied Helen, opening the book she had brought with her at the cat and lave drawing. Like the Professor, Miss Crofton was for a few moments lost in admiration of the unsuspected genius displayed in the spirited picture sketched, whose meaning she read too clearly to need explanation. At last Helen said, quietly—

“I made the sketch in my book without thinking, and then I could not tear it out because of the sums, and when the Professor asked me about it I could not say ‘the cat is Miss Rowe,’ could I? I did tell him after you had gone out of the room that it was a two-legged cat. I could not do more, I thought.”

“I should think not,” said Miss Crofton, with a half laugh, which she could not wholly stifle. “I should think not, indeed, as regards saying for whom you meant the cat. But, my dear child, do you not know that your sketch is a proof of a great want of charity? You make Miss Kite’s life a boiling one for her than it need be. Teaching is very trying and wearying work under any circumstances. But for Miss Rowe it is harder than it would be for many. She has a high, impatient temper, like yourself, which she needs to be perpetually curbing in dealing with even her most docile pupils, and this in itself is very tiring; but you expect her never to be irritable, never to be hasty, never to be...”