

CHAPTER XI.

CONE, SPRUCE, SEED, AND ACORN WORK.

AN exceedingly complimentary article appeared in an English magazine not long since, regarding the thrift and taste exhibited by our American girls, in "turning everything to account," as well for ornament as use; "and," it continued, "what has hitherto by ourselves, in England, been considered as of no value, has, by American taste been converted into pretty and useful articles, which make not only pleasing additions to one's home, but provide an acceptable gift to a friend."

This article went on to explain the various modes of applying the scales of pine cones to various ornamental purposes, and as it is probable that some few of our "American girls," and women, too, do not understand the best methods few of making this cone-work into articles of real artistic beauty, we feel it would be an unfortunate omission were we to pass this subject over without some attention; especially after reading the flattering notice of our English neighbors.

The best time for collecting the cones, etc., for this work, is in the autumn; when go forth under the sweet-scented pine-trees, and gather cones of every shape and size, besides many other treasures which will greatly enhance the beauty of this kind of work; such as the husks of beech-nuts, acorns, oak-apples, cedar-apples, nuts of all kinds; small knotted twigs, bark, and indeed, any and every natural production that can be collected; and which are scattered in rich profusion through the length and breath of the woodlands.

Having through the "fall" months secured a store of rich and varied treasures, sit down during the long and pleasant winter evenings and form them into "things of beauty."

The first step is to sort out each thing to itself in little boxes or cases, which will prevent much confusion, and greatly expedite matters. The largest of the cones must be carefully separated with a knife, each scale removed and laid away for future use, keeping the little cluster upon the point entire, as it is frequently of great use, looking like a little carved rose, which is a very beautiful addition in some parts of the work.

Having each article ready, obtain some Cepal varnish; a round camel's-hair brush of medium size; card-board or wooden foundation, according to the article to be made; strong needle and thread; small gimp-tacks and hammer, and a brad-awl.

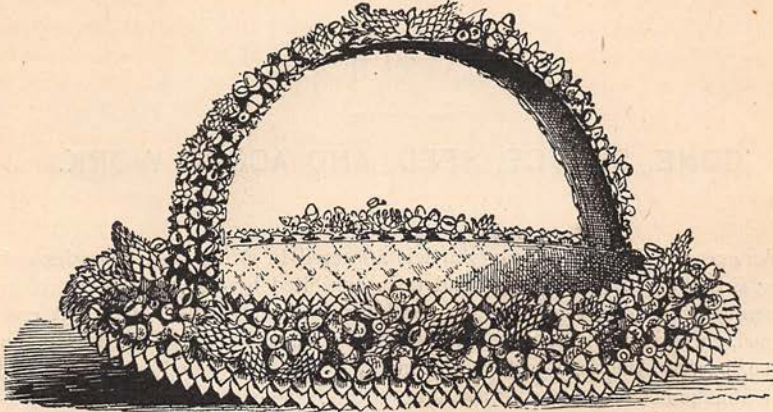


Fig. 1.

Baskets are made upon a card-board foundation, but brackets, wall-pockets, etc., require wood of a dark natural color; or stained in imitation of old oak, walnut, or other wood. Card-baskets are pretty, covered with cones in the following manner: Form a basket of desired shape, of heavy pasteboard, cutting an oval or round bottom with shallow side; made to spread at the top, by using four pieces, wider at the top than bottom, which should fit around the edge of the bottom-piece; make also a circular or oval brim around the edge, as shown in Fig. 1.

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The pieces should all be covered with brown paper, the rougher the better; and stitched together with strong thread. The basket formed, commence by stitching all around the edge of the brim the largest of the cone-scales, covering the entire edge; then, proceeding with a size a very little smaller, to cover the stitches upon the first row, by making a second row, and continuing this until the whole surface is covered; making the points of one row to come between those of the preceding. Cover the sides in the same manner, placing the scales at the bottom of the sides, and the upper edge of the brim, with their points reversed; thus forming a neat edge-finish. Make a handle in the same manner. Proceed then to decorate the sides and rim with wreaths, formed of the various woodland treasures, acorns, nuts, leaves cut from bark, and the flat moss from

old tree-bark; tips of cones, acorn-cups, tiny cones and burs, and berries of various kinds, or, indeed, with any pretty rustic thing that has been collected; arrange dried tendrils, etc., in as graceful a manner as possible.

Care must be taken to entirely cover the the card-board, as spaces showing the frame work would look bad. Many small things can be put in by means of glue; as, for instance, an acorn here and there, a tiny oak-apple, the extreme point of a cone, besides other things which will doubtless easily occur to the fair operator. A little ingenuity will suggest many ideas, which will all tend to the perfection and beauty of the work.

The handle requires to be done in the same way as the other part of the basket; but one row of the scales stitched at each edge will be found to be sufficient; and in making the wreath, the smallest of the cones, etc., should be used; taking care to select the variety which has already been brought into use in the basket. It is a good plan to stitch a round bonnet-wire along the under side of the handle, which will strengthen it considerably, as well as allow of its being bent to a prettier, or the desired form.

Having proceeded thus far, the next thing to be done is to varnish your work, for which the best Copal varnish must be used, applied with a camel's-hair pencil of a moderate size, the utmost attention being paid to insert the brush into every little crevice; do not omit any part.

Having thoroughly varnished your basket, put it away in some place entirely free from dust, and let it remain a night, so that it may be per-

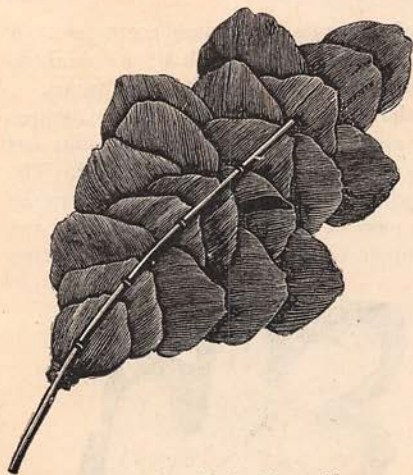


Fig. 2. Acorn Leaf. Upper side.

fectly dry before lining it. You may now make the lining, which should be of silk or satin, the color, of course, as taste dictates; some bright color looks best, such as amber, brilliant green, rose, or blue. If intended for a gift, it is wise to choose a color which will harmonize either by contrasting or matching the furniture of the room it is going to be placed in. Amber does well for almost any other color, and contrasts admirably with the brown tints of the cones. Having made your choice, cut a piece of wadding the shape and size of the bottom of the basket, and also of the strip going round. Cover these on one side with the silk, and then stitch neatly together in the form of the basket. Put around the top a quilling of narrow satin ribbon, the same shade as the silk, and after having done the handle in the same way, and stitched it very strongly to the basket,

put in this lining, which will fit without any further sewing. The underneath part of the basket must have paper pasted over it to hide the stitches, and render your work perfectly neat and tidy. The basket will now be complete.

Very nice spill cups can be made in precisely the same way, using empty wooden boxes. Very handsome boxes for envelopes, stereoscopic slides, etc., can be made by tastefully covering old cigar-boxes. Stands for hyacinth-glasses or vases of flowers, can be produced by covering empty boxes in which gentlemen's collars have been kept. In this case the cones must be stitched on, as was done in the basket, using the "scales" as the foundation. In fact, the cones may be applied to the decoration of a great variety of articles, which would be otherwise useless, and perhaps meet the fate of household rubbish, generally.

ALMANAC-FRAME.

Fig. 4 represents a mosaic pattern of fir-apples, pine cones, acorns, etc. A frequent walk through the woods and forests, will bring all the materials directly within easy reach of every lady who desires to construct such a frame.

The leaves of the fir-apples, also of the pine cones, in their different shapes and sizes, also the opened and closed fir-apples, the shells of the beech-nuts and acorns, are first cleaned in water, with a brush, before they can be used. The whole material must also all be wetted, when required to be sewn on to form the pattern. The frame-foundation is of a piece of thick card-board, fourteen and one-fourth inches deep in the middle, and on each side nine and one-half inches and thirteen and one-half inches wide, which is to be cut out in curves, as per illustration. A space five and one-fourth inches wide, two and one-fourth inches deep, and four and one-fourth inches from the lower edge, is left open in the middle for the almanac. The fir leaves are now sewn round this with brown silk; one row of cone-leaves finishes the outer edge of the frame, but three rows of a cornet-like shape go round the inner one. The space between these leaves is filled up with fir-apple leaves, put flat over each other. For the relief-like part of the frame, all the acorn-leaves and acorns, the different large closed and open fir-apples, the open shells of the beech-nuts, with wire-stalks attached, and a few

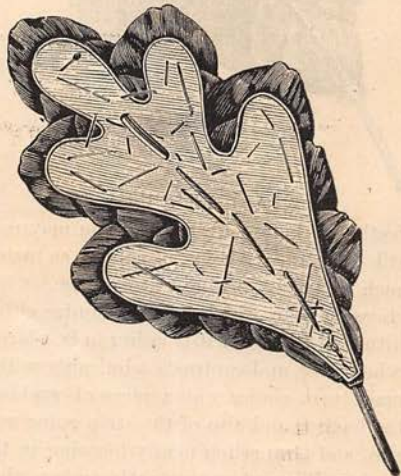


Fig. 3. Acorn Leaf. Under side.

curled wire-tendrils mixed in, are to be arranged in a wreath-like way and bound on a thick wire-stalk.

The mode of making these leaves is best seen by referring to illustrations 2 and 3. In Fig. 3 is shown the plain foundation of the leaves cut out; and then, in Fig. 2, it is shown all sewn over with the rows of the fir-leaves. The

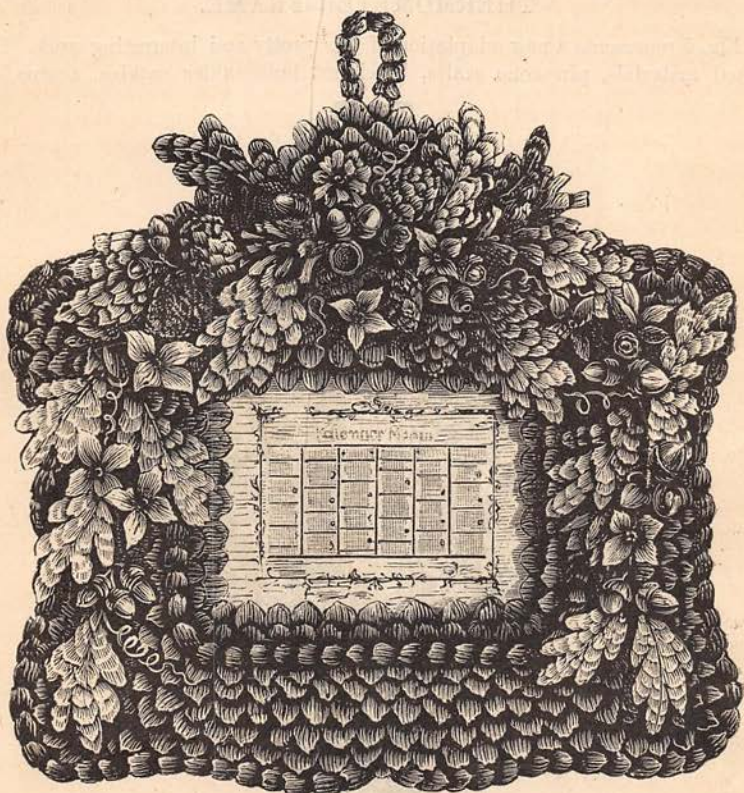


Fig. 4. An Almanac-Frame.

thick, middle vein, is of wire twisted over, being continued as a stalk, but going through the card-board at the upper point, is to be bent over at the back, as seen in Fig. 3. Each leaf is pasted at the back with brown paper; after the diadem-like mosaic wreath is finished it is sewn on the frame.

To hang the latter up is a wire loop, two and one-fourth inches long, covered with fir-apple leaves, which is sewn on the top of the frame; this is covered beforehand, carefully, with brown paper, to hide the many stitches at the back.

When the mosaic is perfectly dry, it is brushed over with good Copal varnish. In order to enliven the mosaic, a few of the leaves and tendrils are to be touched with gold and silver, which can be bought at appropriate stores. A small place must be cut in, across the frame, to slip in the almanac.

THERMOMETER-FRAME.

Fig. 5 represents a new adaptation of this pretty and interesting work. The usual materials, pine-cone scales, beech-nut hulls, alder catkins, acorns, etc.

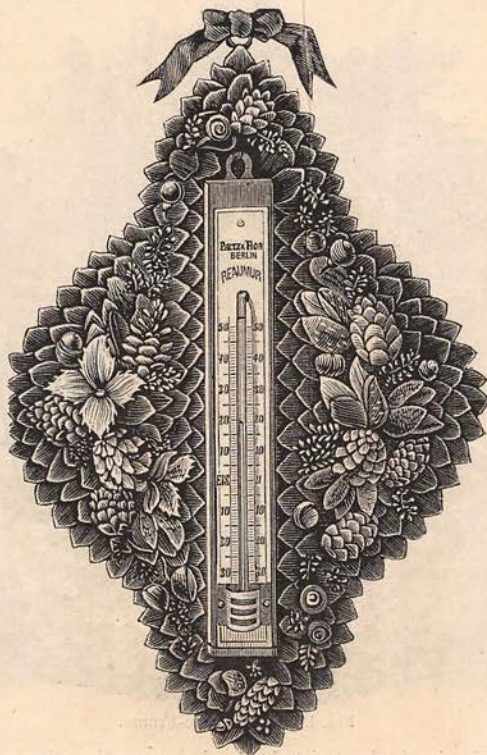


Fig. 5. Thermometer-Frame.

Take the best flakes of large pine cones, fir-apples of different shapes and sizes, empty husks of beech-nuts, the foliage of alders, commonly called lambs, whole and half-cut acorns, and clean them, with a small brush, in water. The foundation of the frame is of strong pasteboard, eleven and a half inches high and eight inches wide, and cut out in curves; the pasteboard being covered on both

sides with brown silk-paper. The different materials, still damp, are now sewn with brown silk on the outer and inner edges of the frame, in a mosaic pattern, edged on both sides with two rows of leaves, leaving a space in the center seven and a quarter inches long and one inch wide for the thermometer. Group the mosaic parts in any taste; the illustration suggests a neat arrangement. A brass ring, by which to hang up the frame, is fastened to it by means of a loop of ribbon, ere the brown paper is pasted to the back of the frame. A bow of brown ribbon is tied to the ring.

FLOWER-STAND.

This is a Jardiniere, also decorated with groups of fir-apples, etc. The frame of this flower-stand consists of cane-rods. The thin bottom on which the flower-pots stand, is made of tin, and can be supplied by any tinman, being put in



Fig. 6. Flower-Stand (Jardiniere) Decorated with Groups of Fir-Apples, Etc.

when the stand is finished; almost any furniture or basket maker can furnish the cane, which should be of yellow color. A better stand, much more orna-

mental, yet requiring more skill and trouble to make, is composed of the following materials: Black woolen rods, with white pearl beads, can be bought at most fancy shops; the stand is made of six posts, or sets of rods, which are each six and a quarter inches high, and every two put behind each other and joined by cross-rods: between these double rods goes the decorations to be made as a stripe; rods, put on crosswise, afford a bottom on which the round tin drawer, eleven and a quarter by eleven and three-quarters inches large, rests; the decoration of this stand, also to be of a pattern worked on java, or common canvas, if desired, is especially worthy of attention, on account of its novel elegance. The flower-groups seen are of fir-apple mosaic, put on *en relief*, raised, which have a very tasteful effect, either on green, brown or scarlet cloth. The carefully-cleaned fir-apple leaves, put on wire, are then formed into flowers, etc., and these, with the addition of catkins, beech-nuts, small cones, and bunches of juniper-berries, arranged in a bouquet on the cloth foundation, which is first stretched over a piece of card-board.

After the bouquet has been sewn on, the places for the different flowers and leaves having been, of course, traced out beforehand, they are carefully varnished over with good brown transparent varnish, and the back of the card-board pasted over with a colored or dark lining before putting the trimming on the stand.

HANGING-BASKET WITH IVY.

Materials: Pasteboard and brown paper for the basket; fir-cones, pine-cones, alder-catkins, beech-nuts, acorns, etc.; leather, not too thick; green oil paint, in two shades; flower-wire, and green ribbon, a quarter of an inch wide. The frame of the hanging-basket, Fig 7, may be constructed with very little trouble. The separate parts may be sewed or pasted together; if pasted, the seams must be secured by strips of linen. The cone-work constructed of the above-mentioned materials is sewed on. For the smooth surfaces the scales of large fir-cones are employed; these must not be longer than one-half or three-quarters of an inch long, so that they may be arranged, lying smoothly, close to each other. Six parts constitute the lower arch of the basket. When these have been joined at the sides, they are covered, beginning at the lower edge, with scales of fir-cones, sewed on in transposed rows up to within one-fifth of an inch distant from the top, over which empty the space, the upper part of the basket is then fitted. A row of scales of fir-cones, about one-half an inch long, sewed over each other in such a manner that the bright heads protrude; mark the seams at the sides; a large fir-cone, about two inches long, serves, as may be seen in the engraving, for the tassel-like ornament at the bottom. On the upper rim of this lower part of the basket, rests a hexagon of card-board, which must be fitted exactly to the shape, and for whose support a strip of pasteboard is pasted at an even height round about it. But before this is fitted in, side-walls of pasteboard, four inches high, and covered with brown paper,

must be fastened to the uncovered margin of each lower-side part of the basket. The sides must meet exactly. The cone-work covering for these parts is to be executed on separate pieces of card-board, one-quarter of an inch narrower, and as much longer as these very parts, and pasted over with brown paper;

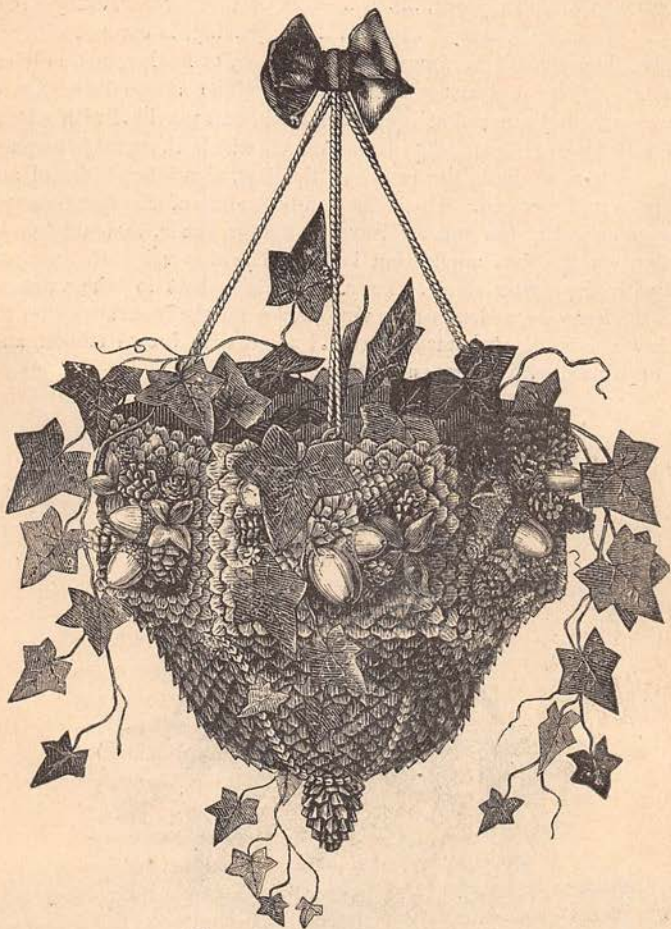


Fig. 7. Hanging-Basket, with Ivy.

they are then fitted to the basket; where they are wanting in breadth, the overlapping scales cover the deficiency; and where they are too long, they cover the margin that was left bare below. As may be seen in the illustration, each

side-part has a smooth margin of scales of fir-cones, and in the center, as variegated a cluster as possible of the remaining materials. Three brass rings, fastened to the side-parts serve for the cords to be passed through. After the hexagon of pasteboard has been fitted in, and the inside of the basket neatly pasted over with brown paper, the cone-work is covered with a layer of Copal varnish. Our model, as may be seen in the engraving, is covered with vines of ivy, which, though made in a most simple manner, of leather, not only successfully imitate fresh ivy, but are indestructible. The single leaves are cut in various sizes from leather that is not too thick, and provided with wire stems, covered with green ribbon. The hole through which the wire is to pass, may be made with a needle in the center of the leaf, about two-fifths of an inch distant from its lower end. The stems and both sides of the leaves are painted an olive-green color, the smaller leaves a lighter shade, and this process is repeated when the first application is dry. The fine veins of the leaves are painted with the lighter shade. For a model, it is best to take a natural ivy-leaf. A thicker wire, as long as the vine, serves for the branches to be tied to; at the lower ends, the stem may be wound about with brown ribbon, and here and there painted with the green paint.

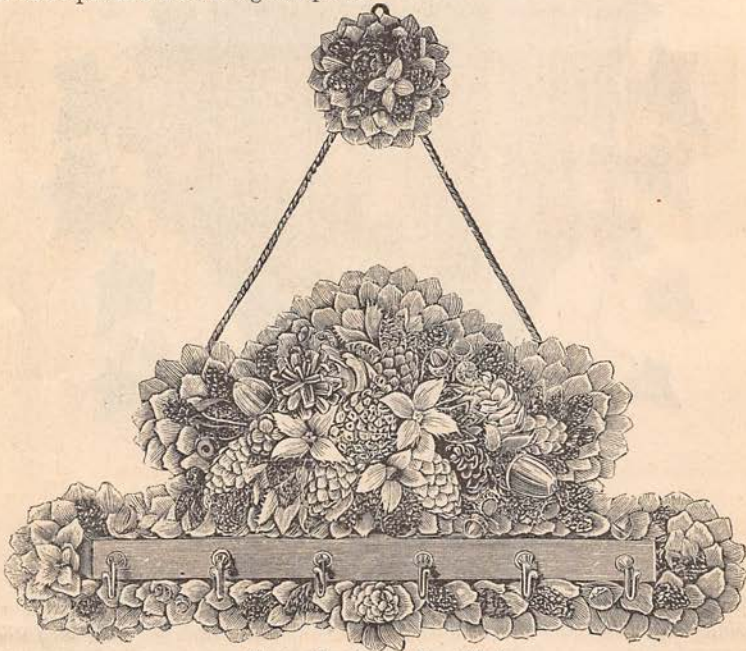


Fig. 8. Key-Rack. Cone-Work.

KEY-RACK.—CONE-WORK.

This Rack is covered with the cone-work, leaving a space for the board that contains the hooks, and which is about four-fifths of an inch wide, and ten and two-fifths inches long. The board may be made by any carpenter, and is furnished with brass hooks. A wire nail, bent over at the back, suffices to fasten it to the card-board back. A brass ring at the top serves to hang the rack up; besides this, two cords, each eleven inches long, meeting beneath a circle of pasteboard two inches in diameter, and covered with cone-work, further secure the rack to the wall.

LAMBREQUIN IN CONE-WORK.

Materials: Pine cones, open hulls of beech-nuts, acorns, etc.; card-board, coarse wire covered with brown tissue-paper, thin wire, brown paper, Copal varnish, silver and gold dust, etc. The foundation of our model consists of card-board; it is twenty-two and two-fifths inches long, seven and three-fifths inches wide in the center, three and one-fifth inches wide at the sides, and curved at the bottom as indicated in Fig. 9. This foundation is covered with the scales of pine cones. Sew the first row all around the margin, then sew

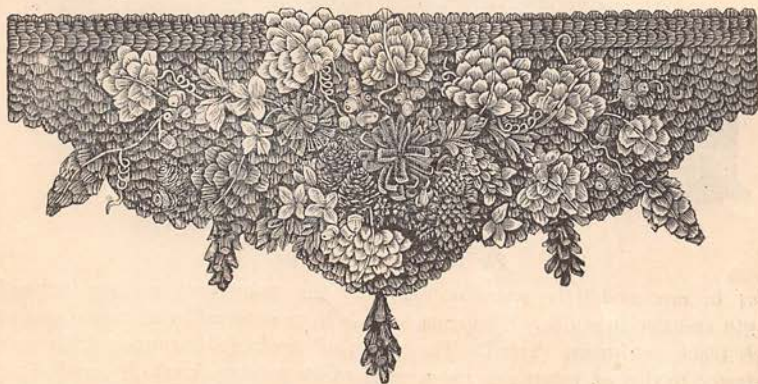


Fig. 9. Lambrequin.

two rows of scales cross-wise at the top; fill up the rest, beginning at the bottom, with the scales pointing downwards. The raised decoration is made in the following manner: The large leaves are cut of card-board and covered with pine cone scales, beginning at the apex of the leaf; the stitches on the wrong side are pasted over with brown paper; acorns, pine-cones, alder-catkins, beech-nut hulls, etc., are provided with wire stems, intermingled with tendrils of wire, twisted into a bouquet with coarse wire, and the whole then sewed to the foundation, with stitches as invisible as possible. The back of the lambrequin is

pasted over with brown paper. When the work is completely dry, of course the reader bears in mind that the materials must be cleaned with a brush in water, and that they are more easily worked up while still moist; the whole is covered with a layer of Copal varnish. In our model, some of the leaves, acorns, and tendrils are sprinkled with gold or silver dust, which gives the whole a bright appearance.

FAN OR GLOVE BOX.

Only the cover of our model, which may be used as a fan or glove box, is decorated by the cone-work, and a monogram in the center; the box, which is ten and one-half inches long, four and four-fifths inches wide, and one and three-fifths inches high, is made of card-board, lined on the inside with white satin paper, and covered on the outside with dark velvet paper. The cone-work is worked on a separate piece of card-board, and then glued to the cover. The piece of card-board, which must be the exact size of the cover, is bound with a strip of the paper that covers the box; then fasten in the middle the strip of brown or green cloth on which the monogram has been embroidered with black

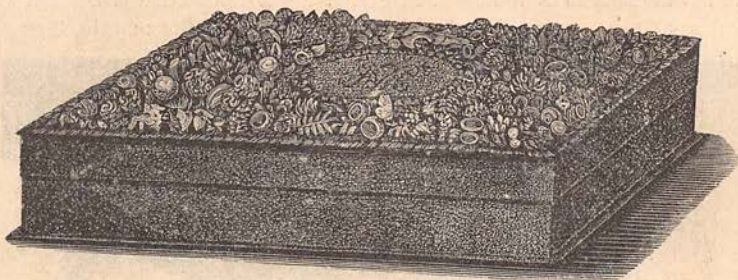


Fig. 10. Fan or Glove Box.

silk; in our model the space occupied by the monogram is three inches in length and two in width. The cone-work is then sewn on in the usual manner with black or brown thread. The mode of sewing the cone-work is much preferred to that of pasting it, on account of its greater durability, and should always be employed, when soft substances, such as card-board, form the foundation.

WALL-POCKET.—CONE-WORK.

Materials: Pasteboard, cherry-colored glazed paper, glue, varnish, pine cones, beech-nuts, fruit-pits, acorns, oak-apples, etc. The decoration on this wall-pocket is principally characterized by the employment of the hulls of beech-nuts, which form the blossoms of the diadem on the front of the pocket. Each part of the pocket, front and back, is worked separately. When both parts have been

cut of pasteboard, cover them on each side with cherry-colored glazed paper, fastening a loop or ring to the back part by which to hang it up, and then arrange the foundation of scales. For the latter, separate the small leaves from well grown pine cones, cut off the lower edge so that each leaf retains a length of four-fifths of an inch, and arrange them on the pasteboard, which has been thickly covered with glue, in the following manner: On the front part

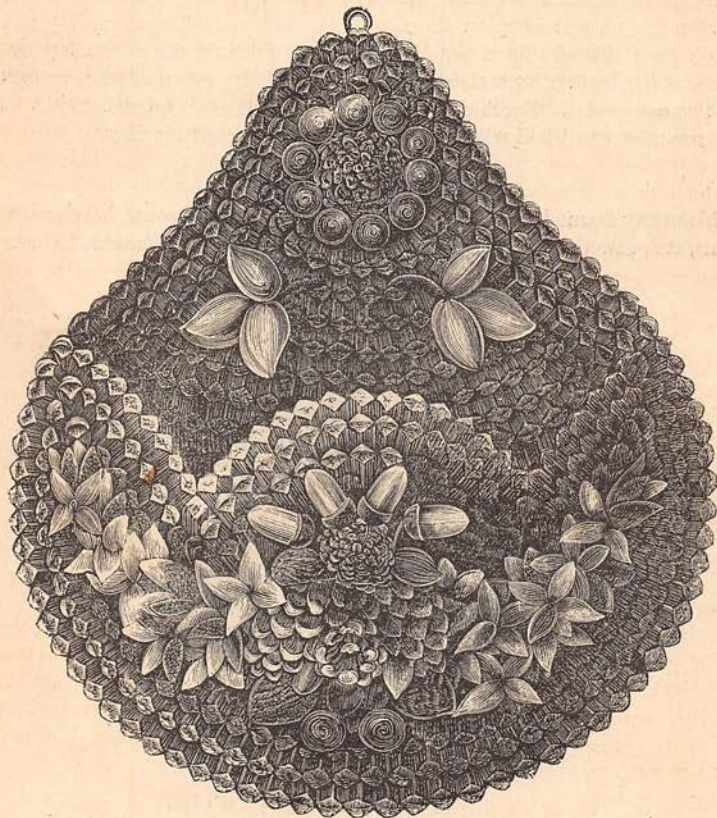


Fig. 11. Wall-Pocket. Cone-Work.

place the scales in a line with the margin all around, leaving them to project a little, and in transposed rows. On the back part, the scaly foundation covers the pasteboard only so far as it is visible, and ends at the star in a slight curve, whose middle point is nine inches distant from the upper edge. The first five

rows follow the outline of the margin, the inner remaining space is filled up by cross rows, carving slightly as they proceed downward. The bouquet and diadem are then arranged according to the model, or one's own fancy. The back part of our model is decorated with a rosette consisting of half a pine cone, surrounded by oak apples; at either side is a spray of three leaves made of apricot-pits, and connected by a short natural stem. The center of the diadem on the front part is arranged of pine cones, two lying opposite each other, and one standing on end between them, over the latter half of a small pine cone, and on each side of this a peach-stone. It is finished off at the top by four acorns, at the bottom by a chestnut, in the middle by two nutshells, two acorns, and two oak-apples. Beech-nuts form a vine of blossoms on either side. Both parts are now varnished with Copal varnish, and pasted together.

PICTURE-FRAME.

This pretty frame is made of the usual materials: pine cones, beech-nut hulls, acorns, etc., sewed with brown thread on a frame of card-board. For larger



Fig. 12. Picture-Frame.

frames it is advisable to have them of wood, and to sew the cone-work on card-board, and then fasten it to the frame with tacks and glue.

NEWSPAPER PORTFOLIO.—CONE-WORK.

The frame of the portfolio, Fig. 15, may be cut in any size of stout card-board. The back part must be cut double, and one of the parts then cut around three

sides, so as to leave a frame and pocket flap. On the latter, fasten an embroidered medallion in the center; cover the remaining space, as well as the frame of the back part, with brown paper. Arrange the cone-work of the usual materials, which must be cleansed with water and a brush, and sewed on with brown silk before they are quite dry. The frame is fastened to the back part with glue and some invisible stitches, and the pocket-flap fastened to the back part by means of side parts, *soufflets*, of silk or paper.

HAND-GLASS WITH DECORATION OF CONE-WORK.

The cone-work in Fig. 13 is enriched by an addition to the usual materials; this addition consists of juniper-berries, which being strung on wire covered

with brown tissue-paper, may be arranged into pretty bunches of five or six berries each. The cone-work is sewed to a frame of card-board to correspond with that of the glass; then glued to the latter or fastened to it with tacks. The card-board must be covered with brown paper, before the cone-work is sewed to it.

ETAGERE.—CONE-WORK.

Materials: Pine cones, acorns, chestnuts, etc., two board shelves, pasteboard, moire paper, varnish, cord, etc. Our model, a pretty corner etagere for knick-knacks, is hung up on brown cord. It consists of two boards cut in a right angle, the two sides of which measure each twelve inches, while the front is rounded off until the distance from the center to the corner measures eleven and one-fifth inches; that part of the boards which is to be the upper surface, cover with brown moire paper, as also the sides of the edges; the strong card-board foundation for the cone-work, is glued to the rounded front of the shelves. The card-board is cut eighteen inches long, one and one-fifth inches wide at each end, and twelve inches wide at the point in



Fig. 13. Hand-Glass with border of Cones.

the middle; it is then covered with brown moire paper and glued to the shelves in such a manner, that the upper edge of the card-board projects about one-fifth of an inch over the shelf. When the glue is perfectly dry, and holes have been bored into the back corners and each side of the shelves, begin with the cone-work. Loosen the brown scales from well-grown pine cones, and cut them off until they have a length of four-fifths of an inch. With these execute the scaly foundation, by gluing them to the pasteboard in transposed rows; the first somewhat overtopping the pasteboard. The upper shelf in our model, has a garland arranged of large acorns and small pine cones. The lower shelf shows a decoration of pine cones in the center, and on each side chestnuts with the husks of beech-nuts to represent blossoms. Each part of the work must be glued very firmly. For the tassels at the points select large pine cones; bore a hole at the top; insert a loop of wire, for which a corresponding wire-hook must be at-

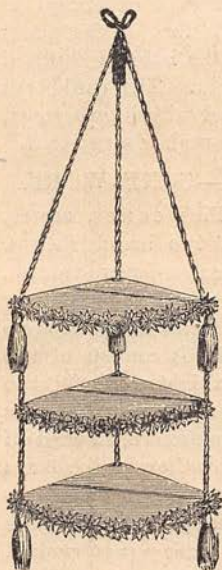


Fig. 14. Etagere.

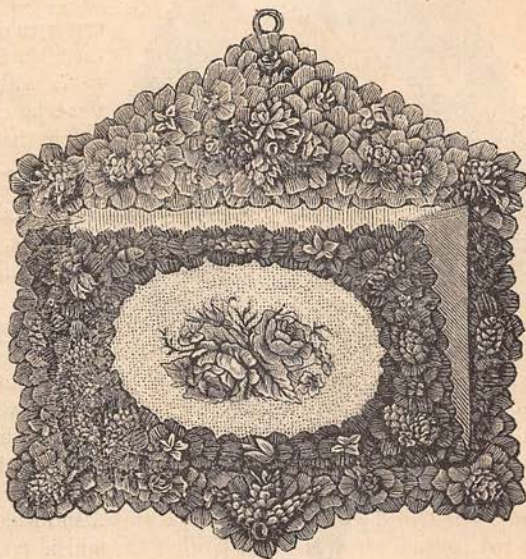


Fig. 15. Portfolio.

tached to the point of the cone-work decoration. Larger pine cones prepared in a similar manner, serve as tassels at the ends of the cord on which the shelves hang, and the top of a cone constitutes the rosette which finishes off the loops of cord. When the etagere is quite finished and completely dry, cover the surface, as well as the tassels, with several coats of good wood varnish, applied with a soft and large brush.

KNITTING OR KEY BASKET.

The frame of this basket, which is decorated with cone-work, lined with red merino, and may serve as a repository for keys or any kind of work, is constructed of card-board. The bottom part, the corners of which are lopped off, measures seven and three-fifths inches in length, and four inches in width. To this is affixed a rim of card-board two inches high, and of the requisite length. The card-board, when moistened very slightly, easily adjusts itself to the shape of the bottom part, to which it is sewed or pasted. When the rim has been

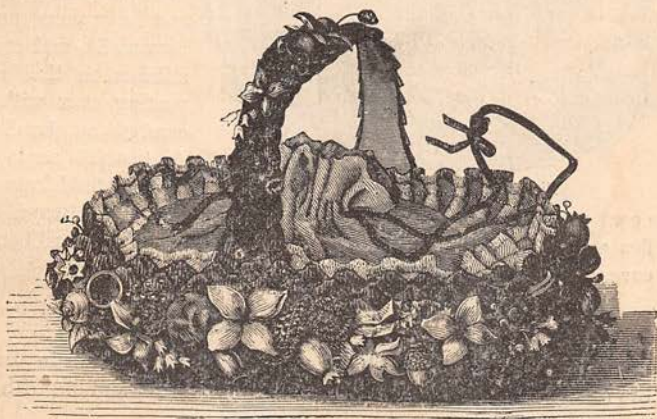


Fig. 16. Basket.

bound at the top with red merino, the handle is to be attached to it. The latter, covered with brown paper, measures nine and one-fifth inches in length, and is one inch wide, widening at the ends and in the middle about three-fifths of an inch. The smooth covering on the basket is made of the scales of pine-cones, and the garland around it, and around the handle, is made of a tasteful arrangement of acorns, alder-catkins, beech-nuts, etc., excluding such larger objects as pine cones and the like. The cone-work is sewed on; the stitches at the back are covered on the handle with brown paper, and inside the basket with a lining of red merino, which is finished off at the top by a four-fifths-inch-wide frill of fringed merino. Beneath this frill, a bag provided with a draw-string may be attached, as seen in the engraving.

NEEDLE-BOOK.—FANCY WORK.

Materials: Stiff card-board, a piece of white velvet, cloth or silk, brown silk ribbon an inch wide, fine white flannel, white and brown twist-silk, scales of pine cones, dried field-flowers, etc.

Both covers of our model consist each of an oval piece of card-board three and

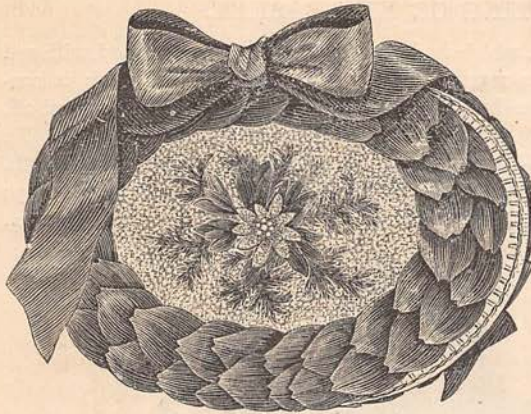


Fig. 17. Needle-Book.

rates the center. It is best to paste these on. The white-flannel leaves to hold the needles are button-hole stitched all around; a bow of brown ribbon holds the two covers of the needle-book together.

LAMP-MAT.—CONE-WORK.

To construct this mat, cut a circle of card-board twelve inches in diameter, and cut the margin into six equal scallops, each about one and one-fifth inches

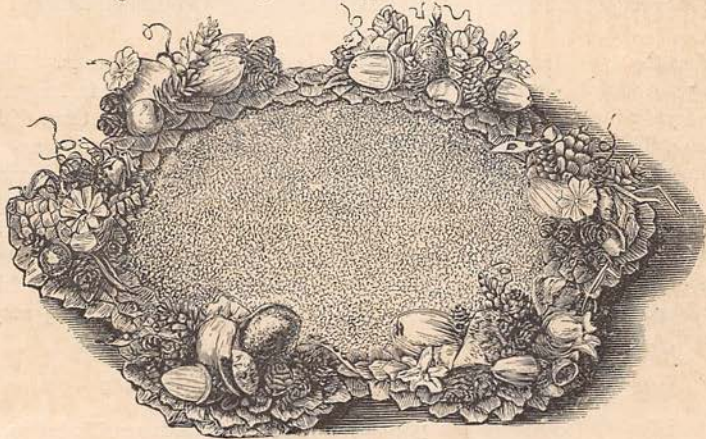


Fig. 18. Lamp-Mat.

deep. Cover this smoothly with green or red cloth; finish it off with rows of pine-cone scales, and arrange a bouquet of the usual materials in each scallop.

one-fifth inches long and two and two-fifths inches wide, covered smoothly with white velvet, and connected by a short strip of ribbon to form the back of the book. Edge the cover with two rows of even pine-cone scales, sewing them on with brown silk, and cover the stitches on the back by pasting over with white cambric or glazed paper. A tasteful arrangement of dried field-flowers deco-

By adding walnuts, hazel-nuts, poppy-heads, laburnum-pods, petrified bugs and snails, the effect will be greatly heightened.

SPRUCE-WORK.

Besides the beautiful ornamental value of the Norway spruce in the decoration of our yards and lawns, or the grand feeling of admiration with which our

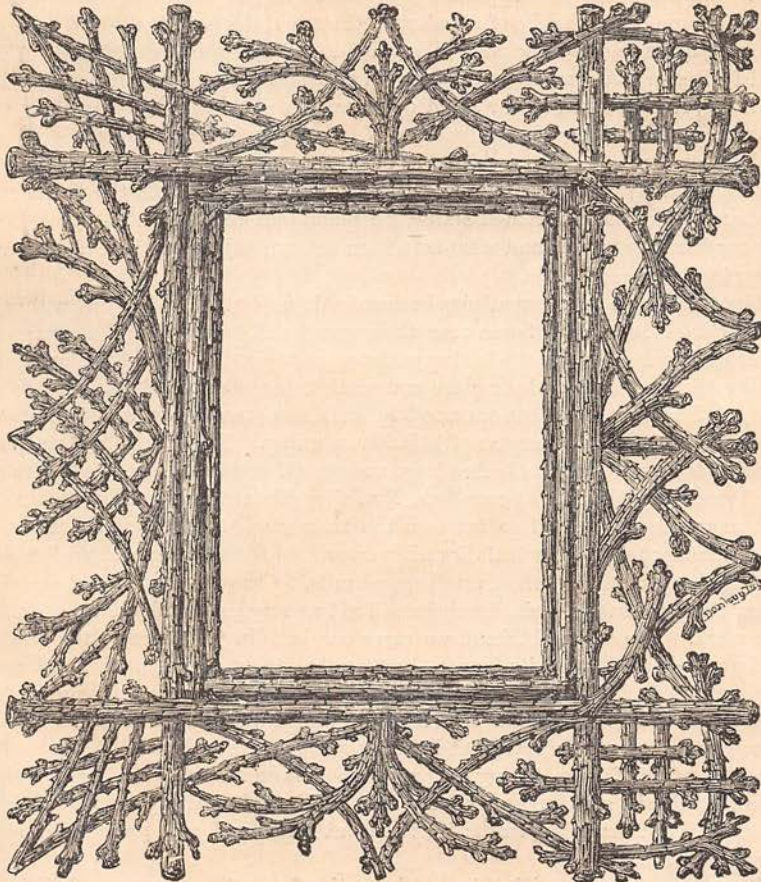


Fig. 19. Spruce-Frame.

minds are filled at their impressive appearance in forest majesty, there are other ways in which they can, in their younger growth, be made to subserve admirable household ornaments, and add to indoor luxuries and comforts. A lady friend,

equally in love with both phases of spruce beauty, says, in a pleasant little description of her achievement in household art :

“There are two ways of considering a Norway spruce : One way is to stand off and admire its noble outline, as it rears itself, a pagoda of living green, against the sky, with its story upon story of fringed branches, its beautiful, long, pendent cones, and its delicate hue seeming dark because of the rich masses of foliage. The other way is to approach with a knife in one hand, the corners of an upheld apron or the handle of a basket in the other, the head inclined a little on one side, and a resolute, pursed-up, I'm-going-to-cut expression on the face. Alice and I often regard our Norway spruces in this last practical fashion, and when we do so, it is because, in our mind's eye, we see something hanging there besides the beautiful long, brown cones. We see lovely easels and picture-frames, and a host of pretty objects which will be just the thing for Christmas presents. So, as resolutely as the sculptor begins to chip from his marble the fragments that are hiding his imprisoned statue, we plunge into the tree, intent upon freeing our brackets, easels, and what-nots from the concealing embrace of its long, sweeping branches.”

Fortunately we have several specimens of this noblest of all the firs, within a few yards of our door. Some rear their grand old heads (that's a figure of speech, of course, for the top is always the newest part) to a height of one hundred and twenty feet, and some are not much taller than ourselves. Our great care, at the outset, is to cut our wood in such a way as not to injure the tree, but rather to serve the purpose of judicious pruning. The pieces must be from three to twelve or eighteen inches long, and should be taken from the leaders of the branches or their latest growths. By doing this, we induce them to throw out more side-shoots, and so increase the richness of the tree. Of course we often manage to get a few little branches from the hidden recesses of the foliage, giving the preference, when prudence permits, to the shoots which have the finest clusters of wood-buds, for these will aid us very materially in beautifying our work. The wood obtained, we carry our bristling treasure to the house, and proceed to free it of its leaves — not feathery now, or fringe-like, that was a “general-effect” quality ; but each branch a very fretful little porcupine in its own right. The best method is to heat the pieces quickly, a few at a time, so as to dry and loosen the leaves, and then to scrape them with a dull knife in the direction of the foliage, taking care not to destroy the wood-buds. The pretty, rough wood will soon appear, with a sort of Chaldaic writing on its surface, which, being interpreted, saith : “Use me at once, or I will grow rigid and unmanageable.”*

Everything is ready. The glue-pot is on the fire. On a tray upon the bared

*It is practicable, however, to use spruce-wood that has been scraped and laid by. It should then be steamed slightly, so as to render it pliable.

table lie papers of pins (very small ones, and others of medium size), a small, flat varnishing brush, a little coil of copper wire, a penknife, a tack-hammer, and scissors which do not shrink from the duty of pin-cutting.* There are also flat, square pieces of soft, pine board, on which we may arrange our work and pin it into shape, by gently driving the pin through as we would a tack; also pine bracket-frames, formed like a T, with a shelf-top, made of half a salt-box lid, which we can cover with spruce-sticks, adding a front and back of fanciful lattice-work, meeting in a cluster of wood-buds at the bottom of the T.

PICTURE-FRAMES.

In making one of these, we first pencil upon our board the exact size of the inner and outer lines of our proposed frame, using a ruler and dividers, so that our work may be perfectly true and even. Then we proceed to arrange our wood according to our fancy, pinning it into shape, guided by the drawing on the block as we proceed, until the whole general outlines are completed. This done, we deftly part the sticks that are pinned together, just enough to enable us to insert a tiny drop of glue; then, when all is pressed back firmly in place again, we proceed to enrich our work by gluing, or, better still, pinning on whatever little clusters of wood-buds we may have to spare. Sometimes we

rob fresh sticks for the purpose, but often we find that in forming our frame we have been obliged to cast some buds aside, and these can now be put on in clusters wherever taste may suggest. Sometimes we fasten them on the ends of the sticks with a long pin, and sometimes scatter them about wherever they may be needed for the general effect (see Fig. 20). The next process is, when the glue is stiffened, gently to disengage the frame from the pine board, which can easily be done by inserting a case-knife or paper-cutter between them; and then, pushing the heads of the pins well in, to cut off their points with the willing scissors aforesaid. If requisite, a little glue may be applied on the back, just where the pin's points are cut off. Next, laying the frame front downward,

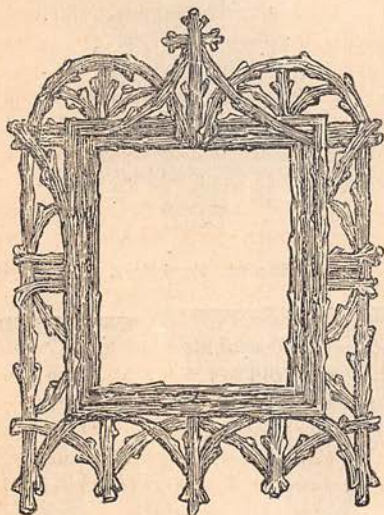


Fig. 20. Picture-Frame.

an extra spruce-stick may be fastened with little pins on the entire length of

* There is a style of pincers or pliers, which are so constructed as to cut wires and pins; but we have not yet enjoyed the luxury of using them.

each of the four inner sides of the square, so as to fill the space in *passe-partout* style, between frame and picture, whenever the latter shall be inserted. It can then be laid aside ready for varnishing. It may be mentioned here that the picture, or group of pressed autumnal leaves, or whatever is to be framed, should be of a size to enable its edges to be hidden behind the solid part of the frame, and it then can be securely fastened in place by means of copper wire crossed over the back of the picture, and neatly wound around the inner corners of the frame, where the spruce-sticks intersect each other.

EASELS.

The easels are constructed in very much the same way as the frames, using a board with penciled diagram for a guide, and taking care that the projecting

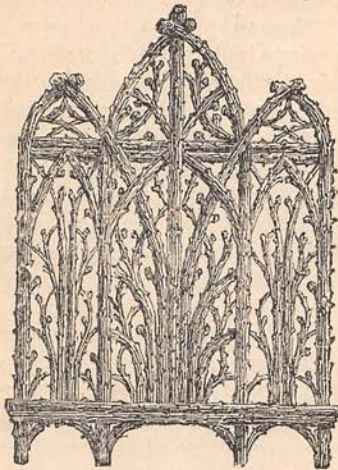


Fig. 21. Easel No. 1.

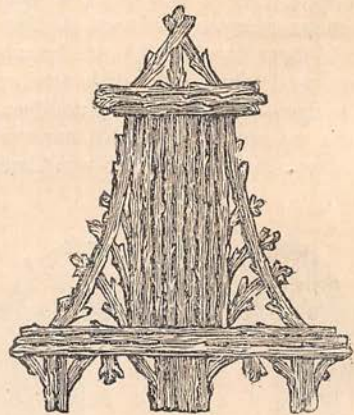


Fig. 22. Easel No. 2.

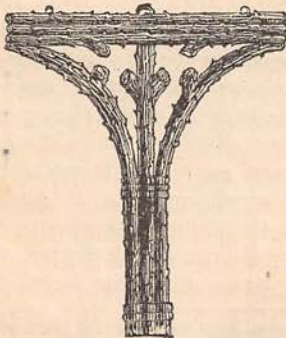


Fig. 23. Support to Easel No. 1.

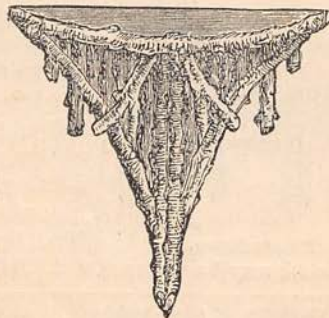


Fig. 24. Bracket.



Fig. 25. Support to Easel No. 2.

ledge on which the picture is to rest be made straight and firm. The easel pattern in the illustration is a very beautiful one, and easy to make. The pattern of the back piece explains itself. The bands of the latter and the hinges may be formed of copper wire, which is very pliable, and matches the wood perfectly in color.

MATCH-HOLDERS.

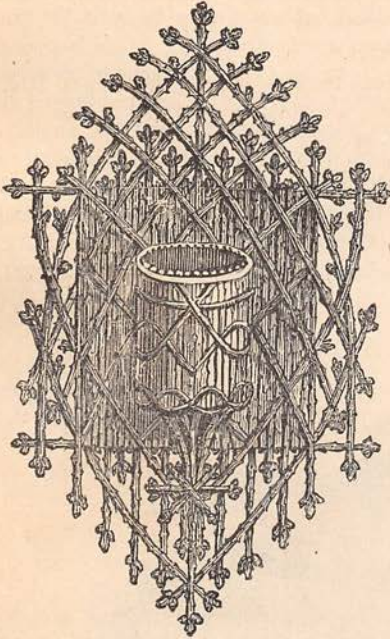


Fig. 26. Match-Holder.

will dissolve. All kinds of spruce-work should be re-touched with shellac once or twice a year, in order to preserve its freshness and beauty; though it will last for many years without any such precaution.

After the instructions already given, it will be easy to make a lamp-lighter or match-holder, like the above. The frame of the box can be made of paste-board, though if a wooden form can be obtained it will be firmer and more easily covered with the spruce-wood. An interlining of bright-colored silk, showing through, sometimes improves the effect of the box.

I have but a few more particulars to offer. It is well to use always as little glue as possible, depending mainly upon the pins, and if these are small enough, the heads will not show after the varnishing. For this we always use gum-shellac varnish, as it dries quickly, and gives a firmness and soft luster to the surface preferable to the unpleasant, shiny effect of other varnish. It can be purchased in almost any paint-shop or can readily be made by dissolving dry gum-shellac in good alcohol, putting in as much as the lat-

PAMPHLET OR CARD RECEIVERS.

With a little ingenuity, beautiful hanging pamphlet-receivers can be made of spruce-wood by following the general directions observed in other forms of spruce-work. We have not made any yet, nor have we seen one except in the mind's-eye view which we had of our dear old spruce-tree this morning. Yes, there it hung all complete! It had some sort of a high-arched back (the easel suggests a form for that), and a kind of portfolio-pocket as wide as the

back, and reaching about half-way up. The outside of this pocket was a lattice of spruce-wood, lightly and gracefully designed, and lined with crimson satin. To-day it hangs, a suggestive phantom, in the spruce-tree. On Christmas morning it shall hang, a beautiful reality on the walls of G——'s sitting-room."

SPRUCE-WOOD WORK.

We give also, illustrations of other styles of spruce-wood work, in which charming results are produced. Other kinds of wood may be used, but the twigs and branches of the Norway spruce are best adapted to the purpose. Cigar-cases, match-safes, and fancy boxes for various uses, are made to resemble a miniature cord of wood, stacked with perhaps a few gray lichens clinging to it here and there. Pretty vases for flowers, ash-receivers, napkin-rings, pincushion-stands, and scent-bottle holders, also, can be made of spruce; and made so firmly and evenly as to quite do away with the old-time objection to spruce-work—its "tottery" home-made look. To prepare the wood, which may be gathered in winter, lay each twig flat upon a piece of board, and scrape it lengthwise with a strong knife, in the direction of its spike-like leaves, until they are all removed, leaving the glossy, brown, prickly wood ready for use.

WOOD-BOXES, SAFES, ETC.

These are made of any size desired. First, pile a number of twigs together evenly, gluing each one firmly in place as you lay it on, until the pile is of the

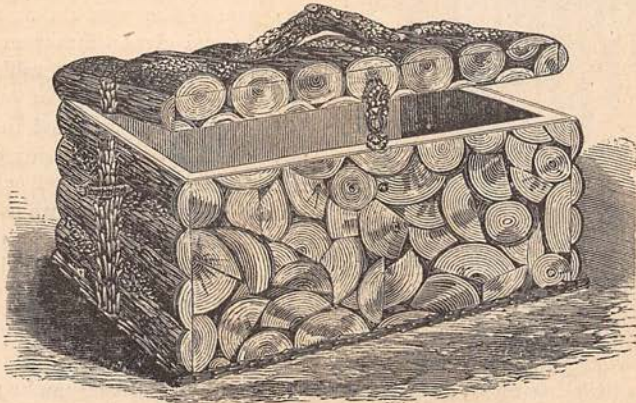


Fig. 27. Tobacco or any kind of Box.

required size. When the glue is thoroughly dry, saw the pile through crosswise in slices, until you have a number of sheets of what, for the present purpose, may be called log-veneering, as it resembles the end of a pile of logs. Now take

a plain pine-wood box, which can be easily made at home; paint the inside, or line it with tin-foil, or fancy paper, or silk, and cover its top and ends with splitted spruce, glued on side by side. Then cover the front and back of the box with the log-veneering already described, and the effect will be that of a little pile of logs. Upright braces can be placed at the two ends of the pile to complete the resemblance to a cord of wood; scraps of gray and green lichen may be glued on as taste may suggest, and the box may be set upon a card, the projecting edges of which can be covered with moss, lichen, wood-buds, brown earth, or twigs. Of course, care must be taken to make the direction of the split spruce correspond appropriately with the position of the veneering, and, when necessary, the front and back edges of the lid also should be covered with the veneering. For match-safes, the cover can be simply a pine piece, of just the size of the opening, covered on its under side with sand-paper, and on its upper side with spruce twigs, the projecting ends of which will hold it in place.

UPRIGHT MATCH-STANDS.

Take a toy churn, such as is sold in the shops for two or three cents, and cover it with split spruce, tying it around about one third from the top with a band of split spruce or of grape-vine bark; handles can be placed at the side, and orna-



Fig. 28. Match-Box.



Fig. 29. Ash-Receiver.

mental bits of moss or lichen added. The cover of the churn, if left on, should be cut away inside, so as to leave the requisite opening for the matches. It can be neatly lined as far down as needed with split spruce.

ASH-RECEIVERS.

Make the frame of wood, of any pattern desired; line it with tin-foil; fasten a strong copper wire across the top, and cover the outside with spruce, according to fancy.

FLOWER-VASES.

Cover the entire outside of a wine-glass, vase, or goblet with brown paper-muslin, sewed or fastened on with gum-tragacanth. Then cover the muslin with



Fig. 30. Flower-Vase.

spruce-wood, moss, and lichen, glued on as taste may dictate. These vases, when filled with flowers, have a beautiful effect, especially in country houses.

A SPRUCE-WOOD CHAIR.

This "arm-chair" is made as follows: Take little bows from the Norway spruce, and let them dry till the green will shake off; then soak the sticks in warm water a short time, so that pins will go through them easily. Leave the

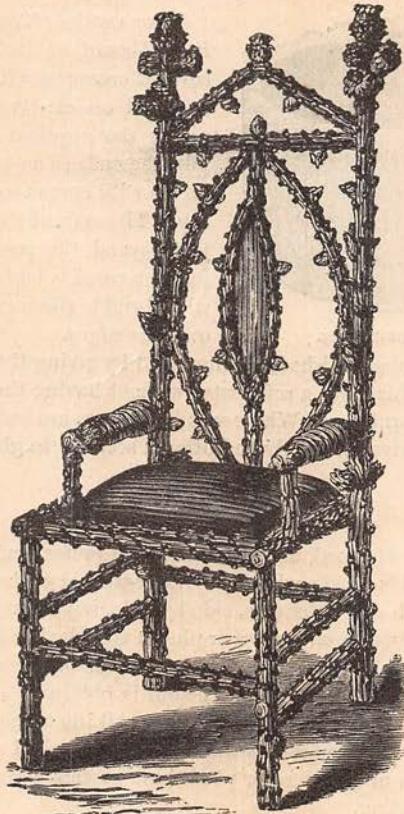


Fig. 31. A Home-made Chair.

buds on the ends; then choose or shape two of uniform size for the back and legs, also two short ones for the front legs and the cross-rounds, as you see in the picture; fasten them together with common pins; when completed, cut off the points of the pins. Make the cushion of silk or velvet; cut the upper part

larger than the lining, to make room for the stuffing; cotton is the best for stuffing; you can have the cushion tacked or plain, according to fancy. Set the cushion upon two cross-pieces, and fit it carefully to the bottom frame. Fasten the cushion at the back by sewing. Other articles of furniture may be made of spruce-wood in the same way.

NAPKIN-RINGS.

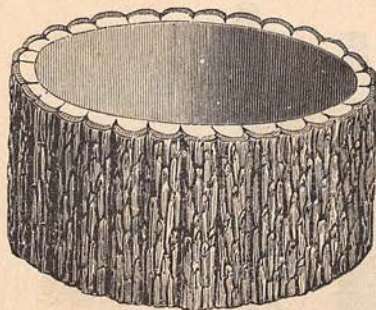


Fig. 32. Napkin-Ring.

Take a strip of strong card-board or Bristol-board, an inch and a half wide; cover it crosswise with split spruce sewed or glued on closely side by side; when nearly the required length is covered, join the ends so as to form a ring, and fill up with spruce so as to hide the joining. The ends of the spruce should project beyond the pasteboard, which, before the wood is laid on, should be lined with bright silk or birch-bark, folded over the edges.

All these articles, when finished, are improved by giving the spruce-wood a coat of shellac varnish; this gives a soft luster without having the disagreeable shine produced by other varnishes. Where wooden frames are used, fine brads or very small pins may be driven in to give additional security to glued portions.

PINCUSHION-STANDS.

Have them turned of wood, of any pattern you prefer, and cover with spruce. A very pretty stand is made without a frame-work by placing six good-sized twigs, of equal length and thickness, side by side, but about an inch apart, on a piece of card-board covered with moss or plush; then laying six more upon these in the same way, but at right angles to them; then, on these again, six more at right angles, and so on till the desired height is obtained. This kind of stand can be graduated so as to be small at the top. All the twigs should be glued in place, except the foundation-row, which, though attached to the second row, should be left free from the moss or plush base so that the entire stand may be lifted from it for dusting.

A RUSTIC BOX.

We give, with Fig. 33, a picture of a very tasteful wall-box, made by a little girl eleven years of age. In the first place she obtained an old cigar-box, lined the inside with silk, and fastened an upright form of Bristol-board to the back.

This back-piece she covered with strips of grape-vine bark, neatly glued on; and in like manner covered the box with twigs of the Norway spruce, after first scraping off their green spikes or leaves. This done, she ornamented it, as you see, with acorns, parts of pine cones, and leather-leaves, secured to the box with slender brads and glue; and when all the parts were dry, she varnished the whole with shellac varnish. You can make this varnish yourself. Buy at almost any druggist's or paint-store about ten cents' worth of gum-shellac; break it up in pieces, put it in a wide-mouthed bottle, cover it with good alcohol, and

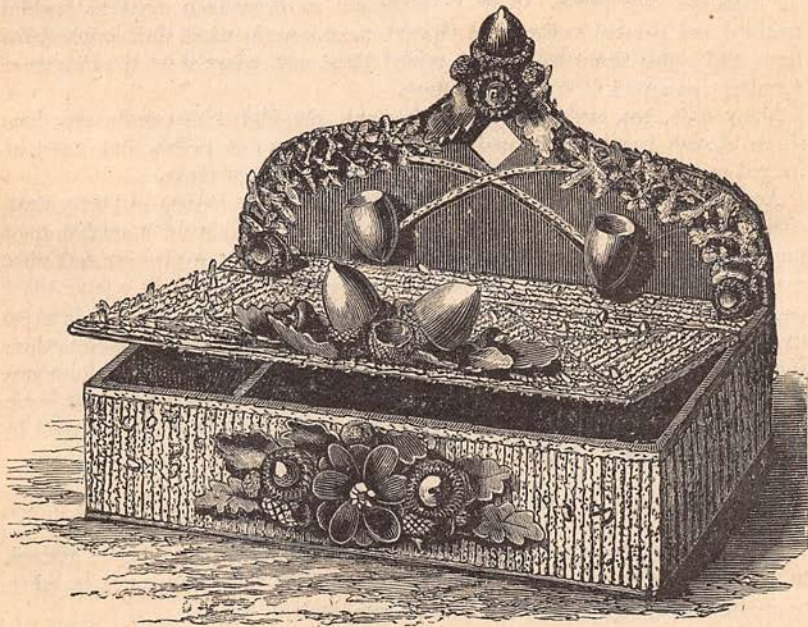


Fig. 33. A Rustic Box.

let it stand until you have a dark brown mixture, about as thick as New Orleans molasses. If you find it too thick to make a fine, clear varnish, when applied with a brush, you may dilute it by pouring in a little more alcohol and shaking the bottle. The advantage of using this preparation is that it gives a fine, soft gloss, instead of the hard, shiny effect of most other varnishes.

These boxes also are very pretty when made without the high back, and are suitable for holiday gifts. It is best to ornament the box only with natural objects—not to mix leather-leaves among them. Leather-work is good in its way, but it is not needed where you have real twigs, acorns, bark, and pine cones.

NUT AND SEED WORK.

The exceeding beauty of some seeds and nuts have caused ingenious persons to form them into objects of use and beauty, a few of which we will describe, and thus lead our readers to still further efforts in this line, which we believe is capable of far greater results than have yet been accomplished. In the first place, we would advise our friends to purchase many varieties of beans, and cultivate them with a view to appropriating them to fancy-work; for of the exceeding beauty of some of these seeds, we believe few persons, comparatively, have the remotest conception. Some of them are as beautifully mottled, spotted, marbled and painted as the most elegant mosaic-work, while their symmetrical form, and highly enameled surface render them well adapted for the purpose of forming chain-work of every description.

Many nuts, too, such as the horse-chestnut, the little chinquapin, etc., have shells of such beauty and capable of taking such a fine polish, that when arranged tastefully they appear like highly-finished wood-carvings.

Acorns may be made the medium of holding ferns in a variety of pretty ways, either in a room, or, still better, in a green-house, or small window-garden, opening, perhaps, out of a back parlor or drawing-room. The acorns are soft when new, and a hole may be readily made by slipping through them a large twine packing-needle. Thread them on wire—a large, round cut white-glass bead between every one. The beads are sold by the row to milliners, at places where such articles are vended. The German oblong beads should not be used, because they have a clumsy, unfinished look for such a purpose. The holes in the beads must be large enough to pass over rather strong wire. The wire is bought by the piece, in a coil.

VASE OF COLORED BEANS.

The vase here described may be made of any colored or sized beans desired, but in selecting the beads which are combined with them, care must be taken to produce a pleasing contrast or tasteful combination.

The beans being soft when newly gathered, holes may be easily pierced through them, either lengthwise or through the center from side to side. Thread them through these holes on a wire, with a large round glass bead between each one—not the large German beads, which would by their irregularity give a rough, unfinished appearance to the work.

Make first a ring for the bottom of the urn or vase, and another for the top, of any desired size, stringing the beans and beads upon them. The wire should be as thick as a large-sized knitting-needle. After making two circles for the top and bottom, proceed to form the sides by turning a hook over on the end of the wire and fastening it to the top ring, between the beans. Pinch the wire close, with pliers, to hide the joint. Thread this with the beans, etc., until it is

sufficiently long to form the ribs of the vase, as shown in Fig. 35 at A; to cross at the narrow part, to form the swelling part of the vase, B, and fasten again to the lower ring. This wire is then cut off with "tin-shears," and the other part formed in the same manner, and both are then crossed by another, diagonally. If the urn is large, there may be two of these on each side, making six equal sides to the urn instead of four. Where they cross at the narrow part of the vase, bind them well together with fine zephyr or thread. These bindings must not show, and fine thread-wire is much better than other material for fastening. Bend the six pieces into proper shape, by giving a regular and graceful curve;

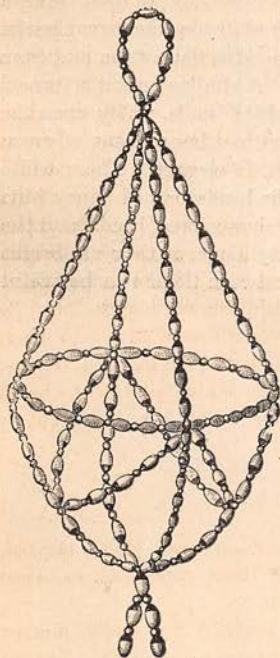


Fig. 34. Hanging-Basket.



Fig. 35. Vase.

join the wire to one of them, and carry it round the widest part of the urn at C, joining it with fine wire to every part where it crosses. Next put in the upper vandykes, fastening the strung wires in the same way as before. The handles are rings of the beans and beads attached to each side, as shown in the illustration.

The beans should be of uniform size for each separate part, and the same number between each corresponding division; for instance, the bottom ring may contain thirty large beans, and the central circle fifty of medium size; then the divisions reaching between these should contain small ones, perhaps, but they

must be alike in size and number, so also the vandykes. Fill the vase with moss, green side out, and pack soil in the center, in which plant ferns, etc. The effect of the moss against the beautifully-colored basket is lovely, and the crystal beads glisten out of the green like so many dew-drops.

In Fig. 34, we show a hanging-basket made of the nuts of the acorn, arranged in a similar manner. A circle is formed for the top, from which side-bars extend to a small circle at the bottom; while between the vandykes are formed by passing the wire diagonally from one to the other, as shown in the illustration. The acorn-nut should be held in the cup by means of the wire, and the beads for this should be either the crystal or opaque white, and of the size of a pea. Handles, made of rings of wire, are first strung with the acorns and beads, from which tassels of beads depend; one is also arranged at the bottom and from the supports at the point where the three are joined. A similar basket is formed of the pure white beans, joined with the cut chalk-white beads, which gives the work the appearance of carved ivory. This basket, with either a lining of green moss or a Bohemian glass finger-bowl placed in it, is elegant. These white beans are beautiful, joined with bright scarlet, opaque beads, or with blue of the same kind. A dark brown bean looks well with amber-colored beads, and the scarlet and white kind, called "red robins," are pretty alone, as they are bright in themselves; but the tops of poppy-heads placed between them is a beautiful addition.