

## CHAPTER VI.

### FANCY LEATHER-WORK.

LEATHER-WORK, as applied to the ornamentation of furniture or lighter elegancies, is not, as generally supposed, of recent invention.

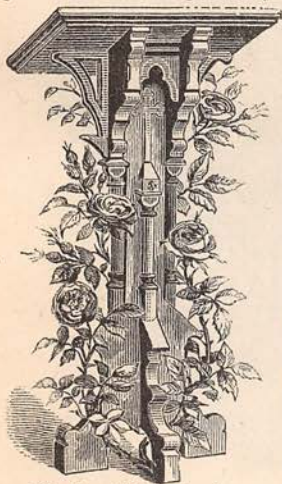


Fig. 1. A Parlor Lectern.

So far from this, it is one of the most ancient modes of fine decoration, and those who have visited the British Museum, that great storehouse of antiquities, will have noticed the specimens of richly-embossed leather in the room of Egyptian specimens, which are said to have been made 900 B. C. Over the door is also an ornamental cross, which is of great interest and of fine workmanship, taken from the robes of a Coptic priest, in the year of our Saviour, 640. Then, at a later date, during the early part 17th century, this work became popular in England as a means of decorating curtains, testers, and other hangings, and was carried to a high state of perfection. Of late days it has been chiefly applied as an imitation of various kinds of wood; and where lightness and graceful combinations of fine tracery or thread-like finishing upon groups is desired, its superiority over carved, or even molded wood, will be found very great; not taking into account the economy of cost, that it does not break, shrink, warp nor chip, and, besides, damp or heat having no effect upon it, it improves in tone and color by age.

As an imitation of old carvings in dark oak, walnut, mahogany, it is extremely elegant, and can be brought to great perfection upon objects requiring bright coloring or metallic luster; to cover it with gold, silver, or the transparent paints, upon a plain or "foiled" ground-work, is to produce the most charming ornamentation conceivable. Nor, as we have before observed, is

this means of ornamentation, comparatively, expensive; and yet it is so exceedingly elegant that we feel desirous to explain the method of making it properly,

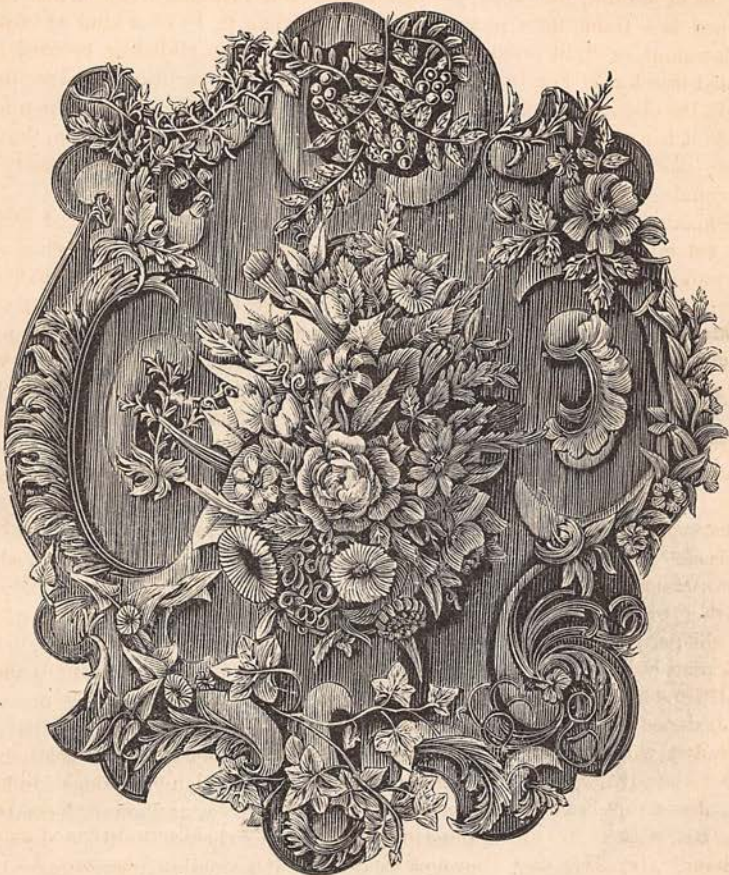


Fig. 2. Wall Ornament in Leather-Work.

to those who admire beautiful furniture, and are willing, at the expense of patience and perseverance, to produce a decoration as rich and elegant as the most costly carving.

The materials are glue, size, varnish, soft uncolored sheep-skin, chamois-skin, old kid, wire of two or three sizes, and, if colored work is desired, paints in fine powders and dye colors. The implements are scissors and knife, molding-tools, such as are used in wax-work, leaf-molds, small gimp-tacks, a veiner, brad-

awl, cutting-pliers, and brushes for glue, varnish, etc. First decide upon the materials and the particular kind of ornamentation; also, whether the imitation is to be of walnut, rose-wood, or other wood. For instance, if the article to be adorned is a frame for a picture, are the materials to be of a kind to imitate black-walnut, or light ornamental-work, which is to be gilded or bronzed and painted in colors? For, in the one case, a dark dye and varnish will be required, and in the other, fine-powdered colors, gold and silver foil, and bronze powders; and as it is requisite, in order to accomplish the work with satisfaction, that all things should be in readiness before commencing operations, the necessity for determining the style of ornamentation will be at once understood.

In making leaves, etc., in imitation of dark wood, use sheep-skin, and rolling it in a damp cloth until thoroughly moist, cut from it a sufficient number of each size wanted to cover the frame; then full them into shape, and while quite damp, press them on the leaf-molds until each vein and all the fine tracery is distinctly marked upon the upper side, as in making wax leaves. Grapes are made by tying marbles in soft chamois-skin, clustering them upon a piece of stout wire wrapped with kid. Berries are made from peas or other round bodies tied in fine kid. For stamens to certain flowers, cut a strip of thin sheep-skin into fine fringe and fasten around a pistil, more or less thick and long. But of these points we shall speak more particularly, hereafter. Elegant baskets for work or other purposes, can be made of wood and ornamented with various designs in leather-work, with lining of bright-colored velvet or quilted silk, and form both handsome and useful articles. Trellises and poles for flowers are thus made very ornamental, and a running border of any pretty vine forms an exquisite addition to a plain wooden mantel-piece; while a chimney-board, which we have had the privilege of examining, was one of the most elegant specimens of this work that we have ever seen. It consisted of a half basket of fanciful shape, constructed of wire covered with leather and woven together like wicker-work; this fastened in the center of a board, which fitted in the "fire-place," and was filled first with walnut shavings, upon which leather-flowers of various kinds were tastefully arranged: Passion-flowers, Roses, Convolvulus, Pansies, Bouvardias, Jessamine, and numerous small blossoms, such as Forget-me-nots, Bluebells, etc., with sprays of various vines falling over the sides and twined around the handle, Ivy, Hop and Maurandias; while a few nodding blossoms of Cyclamen and drooping sprays of Fuchsia finished the collection, which was so arranged that each one was beautifully displayed without any ungraceful crowding. Around the edge of the board was a narrow vine of small ivy-leaves and berries. The whole was stained to resemble walnut, and was as elegant as the richest carved work.

Each flower or leaf, or clusters of them were fastened to long, strong pins of wire, which, dipped in thick glue and fastened down into the bed of shavings, was held very securely, and when dry, formed a compact mass.

Furniture otherwise plain and of conventional form can, by this ornamentation, be made to appear like costly-carved wood.

The objection made by some, that such work collects dust, is scarcely a just one, as ornamentation with leather does not collect dust to a greater degree than carved wood; and a common "painter's dust-brush" readily removes any collection of dirt, and a little kerosene makes all as bright as ever.

#### MATERIALS FOR ORNAMENTAL LEATHER-WORK.

Oak-stain (a spirit preparation), Flemish oak-stain, asphaltum, stiffening, burnt umber, Vandyke brown, spirits turpentine, liquid glue, prepared size, Copal varnish, Russian glue, best upholsterers' tacks, Basil-skins, skivers, molding-tools, grape-molds, convolvulus-molds, berry-molds, veiners, double veiners, scissors, copper wire, pincers, pliers and wire-cutters, boxes of materials complete, Johnson's gold, silver and copper paint.

We will now proceed to describe certain articles that are made very elegant by this mode of decoration:

A handsome bracket is made as follows: Have a frame made of pine wood, ten inches high, eight wide, and projecting six inches; it is made with a back piece, sloped from the shelf to the point in the center, ten inches below; the shelf, 8 x 6 inches, is fastened to the back piece, upon which it rests at the top; curved strips, like sections of a hoop, three in number, extend from the center and sides of the shelf to the point at the bottom. Supposing this bracket is to be of rosewood (imitation), stain all this wood-work with Venetian red scalded in vinegar, using a small soft brush. When dry, rub smooth with pumice-stone or fine sand-paper, and varnish with thin Japan varnish, which gives a fine imitation of rosewood. Cut out a number of convolvulus-leaves, and while damp,

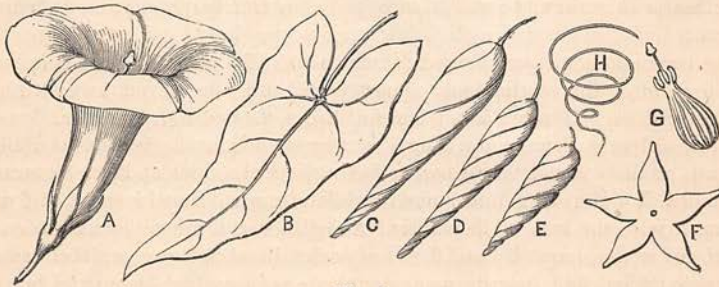


Fig. 3.

mold them on the leaf-molds, making three different sizes; stain these with the Venetian red, and form into proper shapes, then place near the fire or in the sun to dry; and when dry, dip each one in the Japan varnish; form a few convolvulus-blossoms in the same way, molding them on the flower-mold used for wax-

flowers. The buds are made by winding a piece of leather on a tapering piece of wood or putty, molded between the fingers into the proper form, like Figs. C, D, E. Fig. B shows the shape of the leaf, second size. Fig. H is a tendril, made by winding strips of thin leather around a knitting-needle, drying, staining and varnishing. The flower, with all its parts, is shown in Fig. A. The calyx, Fig. F, is made by cutting five points in a circle; the stamens, Fig. G, are four long, thread-like pieces, about half an inch long, which are wound round the end of the wire-stem. The flower, which is cut from one piece of the shape of Fig. I, is caught together with a few stitches, the edges having been touched with glue. When molded over the flower-molds, the leather should be quite damp and soft, and the edge turned over with one of the molding-tools.

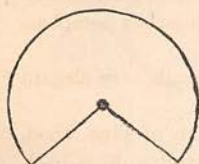


Fig. I.

If the leather is not sufficiently heavy to make the flower and leaves stiff, they must be dipped into the prepared size.

Slip the flower on the wire up to the stamens, and wind strips of Basil-leather around the wire, up to the flower, where secure it by slipping on the calyx; wetting the inner surface with glue, and holding it firmly around the base of the flower; or it may be tied with thread, which can be subsequently removed. Arrange a number of flowers in this manner; then sufficient leaves of the three sizes, to cover the under braces and edge of the bracket, when mixed with the flowers and buds. Stiffen the leaves likewise with glue. Mold the buds of putty, and wind leather around, as before mentioned; likewise form some tendrils. When all are finished, arrange the garlands upon wire, one for each of the braces, and around the edge of the shelf, and place a cluster at the point at the bottom.

It is better to stain and varnish each piece separately, previous to fastening them on.

If the leaves do not appear veined deeply enough, the marks may be deepened with the point of the veining-tool. The flowers, also, may be marked with the same instrument. This bracket, when finished, is exceedingly beautiful.

Several different flowers are shown in Fig. 4, which are formed as shown in Fig. 4, sections 1 and 2. When a leaf is desired, of which a mold cannot be obtained, it must be notched out on the edge with sharp scissors, and the veins made with the tool. The petals of A and B, Fig. 4, are cut by a pasteboard pattern, cut in the shape of 1 and 2, five of each forming a flower, while the aster, C, requires twelve, and may be made double or semi-double, by cutting one or more rows of smaller-sized petals of the shape 3. The stamens are composed of a long, narrow strip, 4, one-eighth of an inch deep and two or more inches long; cut into fine fringe on one edge; then wound closely around the pistils which are made for A, of three long, thread-like pieces, stiffened and curled, and tied one inch below the ends into a knot; and slip the ends below through a hole

in the corolla and calyx, which is similar to the one described for the convolvulus.

These flowers, arranged on a wooden frame, appear like richly-carved walnut, if stained with burnt umber scalded in vinegar, and varnished with Copal.

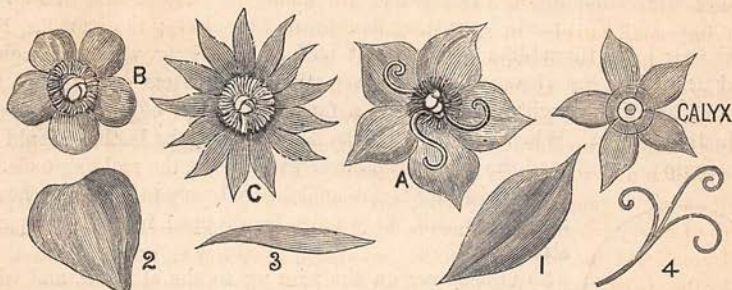


Fig. 4.

A frame for a picture, to be covered with flowers like these just described, is made of well-seasoned wood. Size it all over with glue-water. When dry, apply the stain of Venetian red, burnt umber, turmeric, or any other desired; polish and varnish; then arrange the leaves and flowers, attaching them with glue and tacks. The ornaments may be arranged to cover the whole as a garland, or in clusters, at the corners and sides; or, if the form is oval, with clusters above and below, and at the sides, narrowing as they meet each other. One of the most beautiful frames we have ever seen, was an oval, made thus.

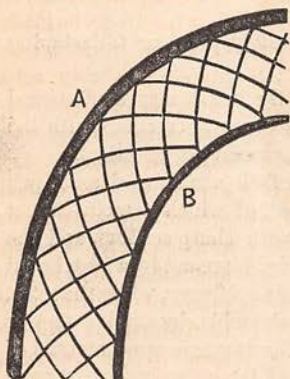


Fig. 5.

The oval or round frame is made with two projecting pieces of wood; one around the outer edge, the other around the inner part, as shown in the section of the frame, Fig. 5. These pieces are for the purpose of holding the trellis-work and vines; which, being thus supported, are held away from the body of the frame, forming an open-work of leaves and fruit upon a lattice trellis.

The one here described is formed of grape-vine leaves, fruit and tendrils, but we have seen one equally beautiful, of passion-vine; and another of the hop-vine, which was peculiarly rich and elegant.

The frame is stained with burnt umber; rubbed smooth, and varnished; polished with a wet pad dipped in pulverized pumice-stone; washed clean and re-varnished with a thin coat of Copal. The leaves are of three sizes, cut while damp, from sheep-skin,

pressed upon the molds until perfectly marked; then painted with size made of fine flour paste and white glue, dried, painted with the umber stain, and dipped in varnish; then drained upon a coarse sieve and dried. The grapes are made by tying small marbles in soft chamois-skin, fastening leather-covered wire in the opening, and forming clusters by fastening them upon a piece of stout wire; make tendrils of thin strips of kid or fine leather twined around coarse knitting-needles; stiffen and color as for the other parts. The trellis-work is made by covering a number of pieces of heavy wire with leather, making each piece to reach diagonally across the frame from one edge to the other, as shown at A and B, Fig. 5; at each end the leather is carefully fastened, and a piece of leather allowed to project a little

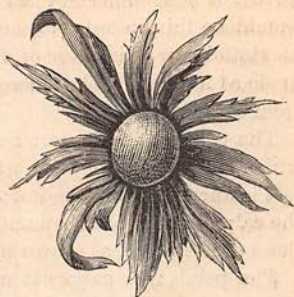


Fig. 6. Filbert.

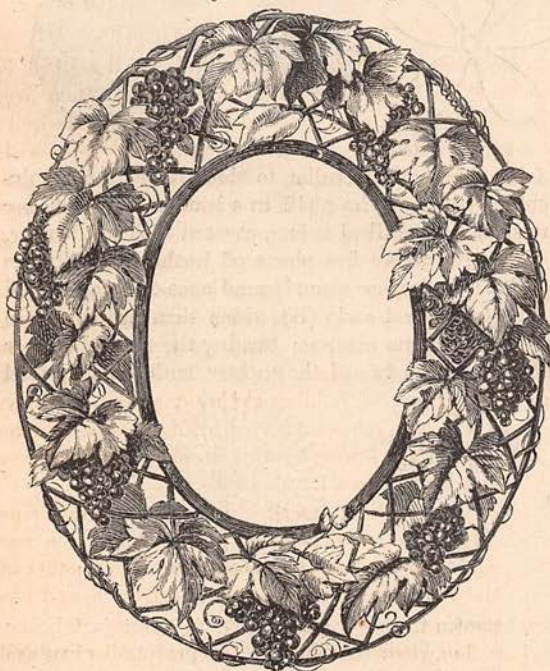


Fig. 7. Leather Picture-Frame.

beyond the wire, in order to allow the admission of the tacks which fasten each piece to the projecting pieces; the wires should be slightly bent, as shown at A and B, Fig. 5.

The heavier stems of the vine are to be made of very thick wire, wound first with yarn or twine and then covered with leather, or of canes so covered. Let a piece of wire extend around the outer edge; through which, tendrils and small delicate pieces of the vine may be twined, as will be seen in the design, Fig. 7.

As it is always desir-

able to have an appropriate table or desk upon which to place the "Family Bible," we give a design for a parlor-lectern, which is made of walnut; or, if pre-

ferred, of pine wood stained in imitation of rosewood. (The Japan varnish should be thin in order to show the scarlet wood.) The most appropriate ornamentation for this piece of furniture is the (*Passiflora*) Passion-vine, which is made as follows: Cut the shapes of leaves and various parts of the flower first, from card-board.

The corolla is formed of five petals, shown in Fig. 8, W. Take a stiff wire, which cover for stem, and fasten on it, two inches from top, a circular piece of soft leather like Z. The inner circle of petals is placed within the outer one of the calyx (X), in such a manner that the points of the outer ones show between those of the inner, as shown in Fig. 8.

The petals and calyx cut and curled, next form the nectary (Y), which is a circular piece of leather, half an inch in diameter, finely cut upon one edge; another circular piece (O), an inch and an eighth in diameter, is cut into long,

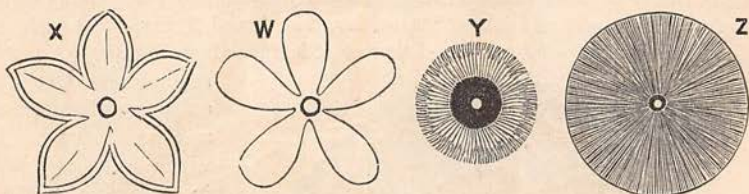


Fig. 8.

thread-like pieces, which form the "rays" peculiar to this flower; the involucre is three-lobed, and cut in points. The pistil in a leather Passion-flower consists of the wire of the stem, as described before, covered with soft leather, wound round almost to the point, where five pieces of leather, cut like the figure at A, are placed around it; the leather wound round once or twice to hold them in place and form the club-shaped style (B), which then has the three anthers (C) fastened upon it in the same manner; turning the strip of leather used in winding, across the top between two of the anthers, with another, wind

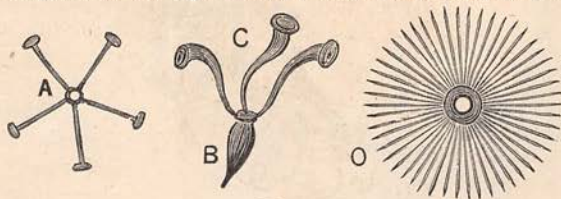


Fig. 9.

around the style and across between the other anther, and fasten it just below with glue or a tie of thread or fine wire: this winding of the pistil gives the club shape to the style below the three anthers (B). The leather used for these stamens and pistil must be made stiff in order to retain the proper form when curled. The pistil and stamens arranged, the circular piece (Z) is slipped on the



stem up to the pistil, allowing it to be a half inch from this point to the slender part of the anthers; gather the edges together and fasten around the stem be-



Fig. 10. Bracket in Leather-Work.

low (see d); then slip the fringed circle (Y) on the stem, and touching with glue on the leather ball, turn the fringe up on it and press firmly with the fingers; a circular piece of stiff leather, a half inch in diameter, with a hole in the center, and

the edge chipped around in a tiny fringe, is then slipped on the stem and pressed closely against the bottom of the upright fringe (F); then the "rays" are put on, and finally the petals (X) and calyx (W) are arranged, and the tri-lobed involucrem, which must be molded into shape with a molding-tool, having it damp and pressing the round end into the center of each leaf; making them rather cup-shaped. Prior to putting each separate piece upon the stem, it must be moistened with glue in the hole and around the upper part, in order to hold all firm when dry. The petals must all be carefully molded and creased with the molding-pin. The rays should be taken, strand by strand, and after moistening the fingers with size, curled and bent into an arching form.

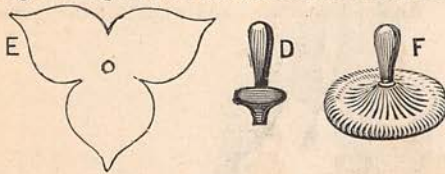


Fig. 11.

some; others may be smaller, composed only of the involucrem and three pieces of painted leather within it; while some may be just opening, disclosing the stamens and pistil. The leaves should be of two or three sizes, and of the shape figured in the design. The tendrils are formed as before described. All the pieces must have the smooth or dressed side of the leather uppermost, excepting the involucrem, as the petals and calyx are to be rolled over, outward; the rolling and molding of the petals is one of the most important features of the operation, as in the proper formation of these the principal beauty consists; unless we except the forming of the pistil, with its style and anthers, and the spade-shaped stamens. The formation of these, nor, indeed, of any part of the work, is not in the least difficult, requiring merely neatness and a little skill in arranging. In this and all leather-work, we would urge persons to avoid

The buds are formed of the stem, upon the end of which a roll of the leather covering forms a knob, with the petals and calyx pressed into compact form and surrounded by the involucrem, arranged as before described, for



Fig. 12. Reading-Stand.

*over-crowding.* This will greatly enhance the beauty and that imposing effect, which is so beautiful in rich carving. Let each separate part be so arranged as to show its particular and distinctive beauty; and never pile one piece upon another, for the sake of putting upon one article as many leaves and flowers as would tastefully ornament three or four. A few handsome and well-made flowers, artistically arranged, will afford greater satisfaction than a half dozen, clumsily-made and carelessly arranged articles, combining an incongruous mass of many kinds, without either taste or fitness.

The size requisite for this work is prepared as follows: Mix, cold, two ounces of Australian red-gum, six ounces of orange shellac, half-pint of spirits of wine; put into a bottle and cork tightly. Shake frequently, and when all the gums

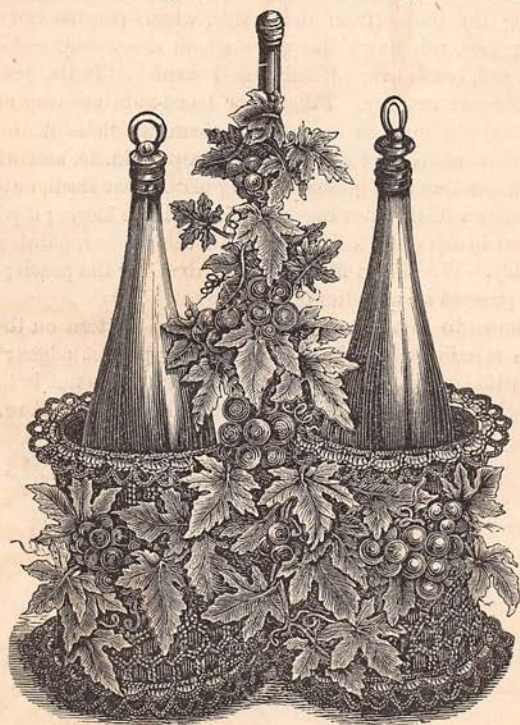


Fig. 13. Mantel-Basket.

have dissolved, strain, and re-bottle. We might mention, before proceeding, that some persons use regular molds for grapes, etc., wetting round of skiver-leather, and pressing into the molds, then filling with wadding or liquid plaster, inserting the stem in the opening at the top, where the ends are gathered, and

clustering on a larger stem of wire covered with Basil-leather. For filberts, acorns, and large, hard berries, use the fruit itself, and cover with damp Basil or skiver leather. (Basil is sheep-skin tanned; skiver consists of the soft pieces on the edges, or the shavings from the currier's bench.) For large specimens of fruit it is advisable to have molds, filling with any substance to preserve the rotundity. A peach, for instance, is made thus: select a hard, unripe specimen, take the impression of the two halves, cut a piece of leather larger than the mold, dip it into cold water, and with the fingers press it well into the mold, then allow to dry; proceed in the same manner with the other; then pour liquid plaster, mixed with glue-water into the two, until full up to the edges, which must be kept perfectly even and horizontal; touch these edges with dissolved glue, and, lifting the halves from the molds, which they should leave readily, place them together, rub down the edge where connected, and when dry and perfectly connected, brush over with size, and varnish. Pears, lemons, etc., may be made in the same manner. Filberts or hazel-nuts are very effectively made thus: crack the finest nuts so as to halve them, which is done by passing a knife around; first smooth the edges with a rasp or knife, and wiping out the inside, you have the tiny and perfect molds ready. Cut Basil, or soft leather of any kind, from these shells, allowing each piece a little larger; dip in water, and, oiling the inside of each shell a little, press in the leather, paint with size, and place away to dry. When dry, fill up as described for the peach; remove from the molds, and proceed as with the peach.

The bract shown in Fig. 6 is made by laying the pattern on the leather, and cutting, always minding to make clear cuts and perfect edges; then curling and pinching, while moist, and painting with size. The nut is then placed in the center and glued fast, the ends of the leather being brought round, as in the

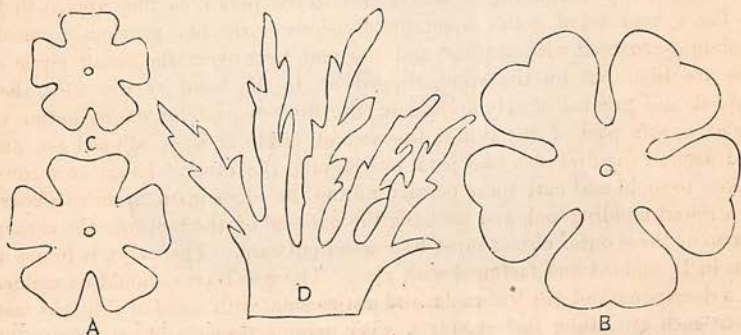


Fig. 14.

natural nut. When several are formed, fasten together in a tasteful and natural manner. These form very beautiful ornaments. Strawberries are formed

like grapes, and the leather is pinched up into points with tweezers and knife-point, and a calyx formed; raspberries, blackberries, etc., are formed in the same manner, with long, pyramidal-shaped pieces of leather, and dotted with pieces of soft leather, wet with size, and rolled into balls; always arrange with calyx and proper leaves. Wheat is formed by rolling leather strips into a long oval, size of the grain, then covering with concave pieces of similar form, to which colored horse-hair is glued; then arrange on a long roll of leather, size of the ear; stiffen and varnish.

Figures are made in plaster-molds, as described for fruit, filling in with any substance convenient; such as scraps of leather, wool, cotton, or better still, common plaster of Paris.

There is no prettier flower in leather than the rose, whether the conventional wild rose, or the full, double-hybrid varieties. As it is always best to cut the petals, or the entire corolla in one piece, when possible, this rose is best formed in the following manner: Cut six or eight pieces of the shape of A and B, which are the smallest and largest sizes, the remaining four or six to be graduated in size from A to B; C shows the third size, one coming between it and A; two between it and B; where eight sets are used they are larger than B. The size depends upon the piece of furniture to be ornamented; for a frame, bracket or other small article, the smaller-sized flowers must be used; for a large table, sideboard or any heavy, massive piece of furniture, the flower may be of the size of the natural one. The corolla of the double rose is arranged with the petals, as they appear in B, with the second set of petals upon the divisions of the one previously placed. The stem is covered with leather, and the end bent over; the small circle of petals are then put on the stem, slipped up to the bend of the wire, then crumpled, and pressed closely around it (the first two circles might better be made of a soft part of the skin); the second circle is then slipped on, and folded around the first one, one petal overlapping the other. Great care must be taken to mold and curl these petals; rolling the edges upon a smooth board with a round molding-tool, and pressing the ball-end of the tool into the center. The two or three outer circles must be curved outward. The calyx is found as shown in D, molded and fastened with glue. The rose-leaves should be molded upon a deeply-marked gilt leaf-mold, and a wire stem with cover of thin kid fastened to each one, then the cluster formed upon a larger and stronger wire. The buds are formed of circles, like the smaller petals, pressed upon wire-stems, in the same manner as the flower; the calyx then cut and molded, and arranged around the petals. For small, close buds, cut pieces and cover with calyx; below this wind a fine thread of leather into the form of an ovary, and cover with



Fig. 15. Veining the Leaves.

soft leather; or, better still, mold a little lump of putty into the desired form around the stem, and color with the stain used upon the leather. A handsome table thus ornamented is shown in Fig. 18.

A beautiful hanging-basket is shown in Fig. 16; it is composed of a wooden bowl, such as is used in any kitchen, stained with a decoction made of gamboge, put in ale or vinegar, or curcuma boiled in water; and when dried, subjecting to the fumes of ammonia; or, by brushing over with vinegar in which a few pieces of rusty iron have been placed for a few hours. Great care must be taken not to apply this too strong, as there is danger of turning the article black instead of yellowish-brown.

The ivy and oak, Fig. 16, combined, have a very fine effect. The bowl being stained of a dark "old-oak" color, and highly polished; the oak-leaves and stems can be formed of tiny, gnarled branchlets of real oak, and the acorns may be formed of the natural cups, with nuts of putty, or the half of small pecan-nuts, glued into the cups. Or the stems may be formed of thick wire, covered with leather, and the nuts of the

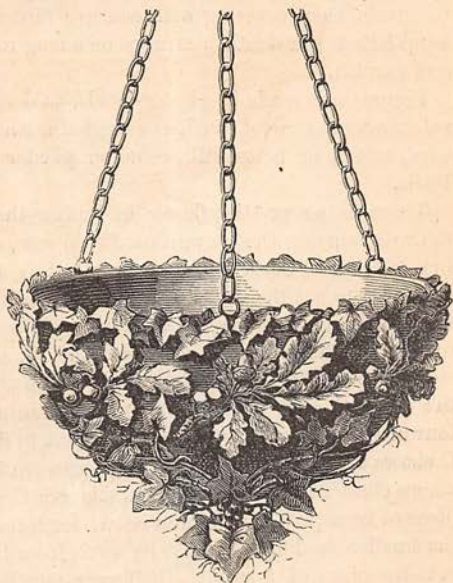


Fig. 16. Hanging-Basket.

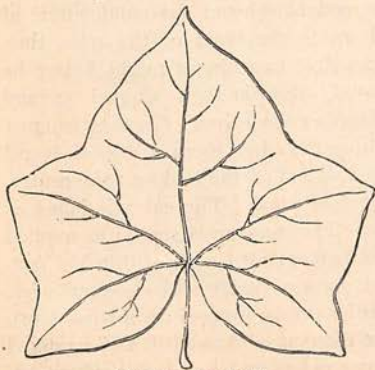


Fig. 17. Ivy-Leaf.

back part of the wire; then attach the ivy-leaves, berries and tendrils to

acorns, also made of kid, over a turned wooden foundation, and glued in the acorn-cups; but the first method will be found the most natural in appearance. The ivy-vines may be formed of covered wire, bent to the proper curve; or, the pliant vines and tendrils of dried vines may be used; the natural tendrils will be found more graceful than any artificial ones can possibly be.

After making the stems and cutting and bending them to resemble gnarled oak, attach, as naturally as possible, oak-leaves and acorns, fastening them on the

wire-stems, and a garland of the same for the front edge of the bowl. Tack the branches of oak tastefully upon the bowl, and twine the ivy among them.

There should be three shades of oak in this piece of work. The bowl, a deep brown; the oak, the natural "old-oak" shade of brownish yellow; the ivy, a

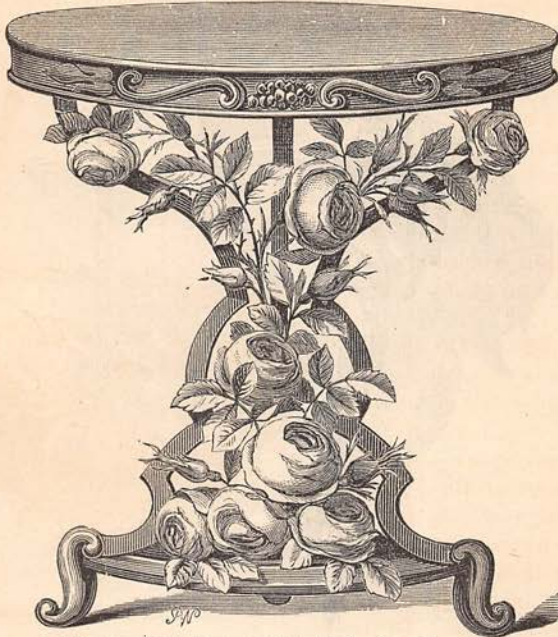


Fig. 18. Table Ornamented with Leather-Flowers.

light oak; the acorns should be their own natural color. Mold and shape the leaves carefully.



Fig. 19.

Fig. 24 shows another pretty plant-basket of oval form, adorned with the hop-vine, which is extremely beautiful in this kind of work. The blossoms are

formed by fastening a number of petals around a piece of covered wire, and arranging them in loose, graceful clusters. The leaves are of beautiful form,

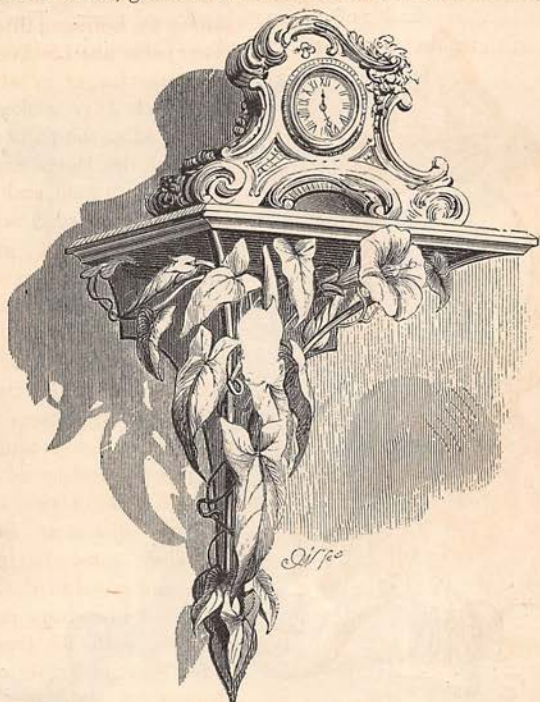


Fig. 20. Clock-Shelf.

and the gilt molds may be obtained at the wax-flower establishments. The form of the petal is shown at A A, and the completed corolla at B, with the leaf, C.

Each petal must be made concave by rolling upon the inner surface with the rounded end of a proper-sized molding-tool. The blossoms should vary in size, the buds being quite small and close; but as every one is familiar with this beautiful vine, it is useless to describe it more minutely.

The most elegant sample of it we have ever seen was stained jet black; a high polish given to the oval, wooden bowl, and also to the leather, by means of black

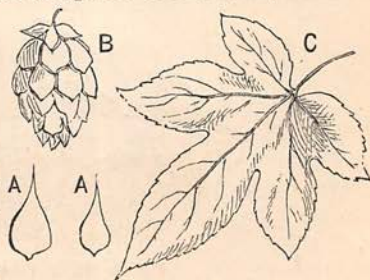


Fig. 21.



varnish and polishing with pumice-stone, in fine powder, and a wet, woolen pad. The stain was made by first painting with a decoction of log-wood chips, made



Fig. 22. Watch-Stand.

strong by boiling; this dry, the various parts are blackened by painting with vinegar in which pieces of rusty iron have soaked for several days. After the parts are all finely polished, the leaves are veined and touched with gold, and the blossoms edged and marked with it. The effect of the black, glossy surface and gilding are exceedingly rich and striking. At Fig. 22 is shown a watch-stand made of light wood or heavy pasteboard, and ornamented with sprays of the fuchsia. The calyx, of course, forms the external part of this flower, and is cut from one piece of leather as shown at D, Fig. 19. The petals, four in number, cut separately, as showed at E. They must be molded into shape and glued to the stamens (F) inside the branching calyx, so as to alternate with its four lobes, and folded one under the other. The stamens are eight in number, long and gracefully bent, as also the one pistil (F). It is put together, thus: To the covered wire-stem, of rather stiff but not thick wire, attach to one end a piece of

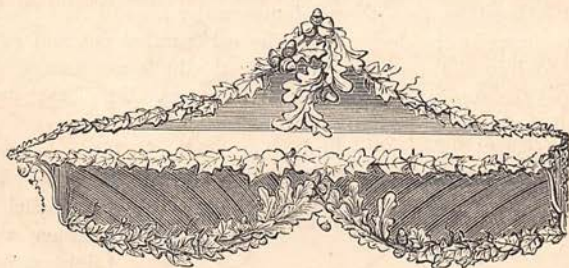


Fig. 23. Shelf Trimmed with Leather-Leaves.

slender wire, or stiffened leather rolled into a round form (F); make an anther upon the end of putty or fine leather. This wire should be an inch long; around

it arrange the stamens, cutting them like fine threads from one piece of leather, four of them three-fourths of an inch long, the other four, slightly shorter; cut the end with a little rounded tip to represent the filaments; stiffen them with glue and curve each one gracefully; then having the petals molded and shaped,

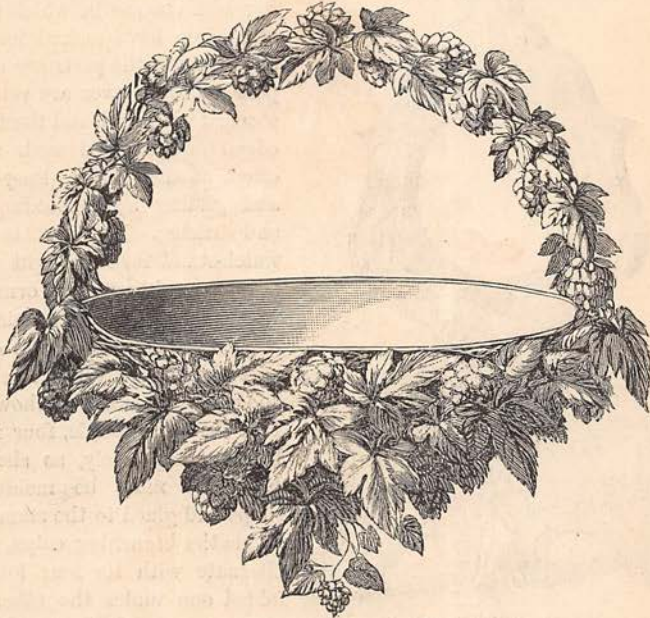


Fig. 24. Basket in Leather-Work.

roll them around the stamens and fasten with thread, fine wire or glue; then take the calyx, and touching the edges with glue, fasten it around the petals, and to hold it together, tie a thread, temporarily, around it. The flower must be formed as shown in the design, with the calyx rolled out and expanded; the petals, surrounding the stamens and pistil; the buds are formed of the calyx curved around the stems, not inserting any stamens. The leaves are of beautiful form, and the molds are readily procured.

This watch-stand is very ornamental when made of white-wood, painted with

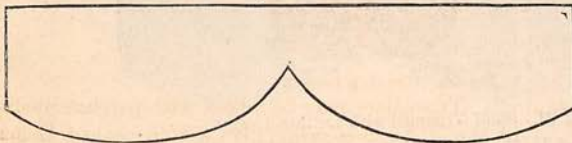


Fig. 25. Pattern of Frame.

hues of the flowers and leaves.

the highly-glossed enameled paint, the leather work of the lightest, finest leather, painted in bright colors of the natural

Use finely-powdered colors, mixing them to the consistency of cream with white of egg with a little distilled vinegar. This mixture must be kept tightly



Fig. 26. Hanging-Basket.

corked, and used as required. The colors may be mixed with parchment-size, gelatine or gum-arabic, in solution. After coloring, give a thin coat of Demar varnish.

When carefully painted in natural colors, and tastefully shaded and tinted, and touched up with lines and marks of gold, leather-work of this style is exquisitely beautiful. For various articles it is particularly appropriate; frames, brackets, baskets, card-receivers, letter and paper racks, etc., appearing like enameled carving, such as we see in the imported work from France and Germany.

### HANGING-BASKET WITH ORNAMENTAL LEATHER LEAVES, ETC.

This is truly an exquisite basket, and with the instructions given in the previous lessons, may be easily made.

The skeleton or case of the basket, Fig. 26, is formed of the springs from "hoop-skirts," which will be readily formed by examining the diagram.

Take four strips twenty-five inches in length; turn two inches over at the top, in the manner shown in Fig. 27; then, cut five lengths of eighteen inches, which bend into arches; turn or coil up two inches at the bottom, and fasten the five arches together closely at the bottom, spreading them to a circumference of twenty-four inches at the top; where fasten them four inches from the top with bands or hoops of the heaviest spring, allowing two inches between the upper and lower one. Finish with an inner hoop crossed below the lower hoop, and bound to the outer lengths with fine copper wire. Fasten a strip of the hoop spring around the coils at the bottom, and give the whole a coat of brown paint, then of bronzing. The cover of the hoops should be retained.

The leather ornamental-work is fully described in the preceding part of this chapter, as it consists of leaves, which, after being cut, veined, and stiffened, may be colored to imitate wood-carving; or still more beautiful, receive a coat of transparent gums upon foil, afterward veining and marking with gold. In this case, color the wire-work a rich transparent brown on foil, and gild parts of the arches and coils. The flowers, color a deep crimson, put on in the same way. *Gutta percha* flowers and leaves will be lovely on this basket, which is handsome, however ornamented.

Very many other useful articles may be ornamented by groups of flowers, berries, leaves and tendrils, made of scraps of leather. Brackets, wall-receivers, picture-frames, corner-shelves, tables, watch-cases, shaving-paper holders, and glove-boxes are only a few of the hosts of things to which leather-work may be appropriately applied.

Ivy, grape and oak leaves furnish the prettiest patterns, but it is well to collect specimens of various kinds, in order to have an assortment. Certain flowers, such as the convolvulus, are easily made by cutting circular pieces of leather,

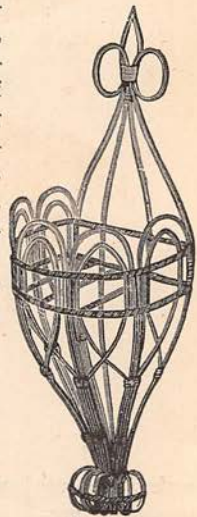


Fig. 27.

and pressing the center, while wet, into a thimble; keeping the smooth side uppermost, and curling the outer circumference over the rounded edge of the thimble, until the required shape is obtained. Stems are provided by cutting narrow strings or strips of leather, widening somewhat out at one end. A small hole being pierced in the bottom of the flower-cup, the stem is drawn through and a ball formed by rolling up the broader end, which will remain inside and prevent its being pulled out again. Buds are made by cutting out star-shaped pieces, somewhat in the form of a white jessamine-blossom, and having threaded the same kind of stem through the center; in this case keeping the rough side uppermost, it can be twisted while still wet into a very well-shaped bud. Real acorns may be effectively introduced among leather oak-leaves; grapes may be formed by covering small marbles with very thin, wet leather, and gluing them together in clusters, when dried; and for ivy-berries, smooth peas may be glued in place, and painted brown. Pine picture-frames may be cheaply ob-

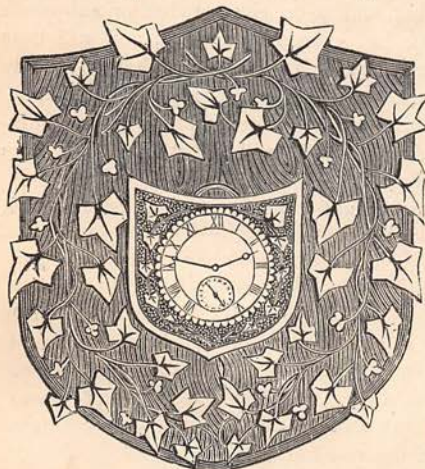


Fig. 28. Watch-Pocket.



Fig. 29. Leather-Bracket.

tained at any wood-turner's, and after being stained brown, are ready to be covered with leather-work, as taste may suggest. So, also, with brackets and all the other articles named. The leather leaves and flowers must be fastened on securely with small gimp-tacks, which, if managed rightly, will not be seen at all. A little glue may also be used to ensure firmness. It is well not to attempt to combine a variety of leaves on one article, but rather to let ivy predominate in one, oak in another, grape in another, and so on, thus producing unique effects. Well-secured leather ornaments are extremely durable, and will bear daily dustings for years; if, in course of time, they become shabby, a little varnish will renovate them. The bracket and watch-case, Figs. 28 and 29, explain themselves. One has only to obtain pine frame-work, and stain and decorate it according to directions already offered. The bracket should be more thickly covered with leaves than is indicated.

Some persons like to dust a little fine bronze-powder over their leather-work while the varnish is still sticky.