

FANCY WORK
WITH
Leaves, Flowers and Grasses.

CHAPTER II.

PHANTOM LEAVES, FLOWERS AND BOUQUETS.

THE old and unpleasant name of "skeleton" has been applied to these beautiful objects for so many years, that some persons know them by no other title; still we believe that the more beautiful appellation of "phantom leaves" will soon become popular, and, therefore, give it at the head of this section.

Though but little known until the past six years, this art is not a new one; which statement will doubtless prove a surprise to many of our readers. Yet, as early as the year 1645, an anatomist in Naples published a figure of a skeleton leaf, which, even in that day, created great interest and curiosity; and many attempts were ineffectually made to discover the secret, which, upon the death of the artist, was for the time entirely lost.

About seventy years after, however, a Dutch anatomist turned his attention to the subject, and, having obtained skeletons of animals by allowing insects to eat away the flesh until only the frame was left, he made an attempt to obtain vegetable or leaf skeletons in the same way, but, of course, failed. He then tried other methods and finally succeeded in procuring some specimens by maceration, which were so beautiful that others began to experiment, in order to discover his secret; which, finding he could no longer keep hidden, he finally published in 1727; and this is the old method (and perhaps best one) which we now use. We will give this process first, both on account of its age, and also because it is the safest and most likely to prove successful. The first step in the process is the gathering of the leaves, which is best accomplished during the

months of June and July; as at this season they are in the most perfect condition. Still, there are some varieties which must of course be collected at other periods, and the seed-vessels and those blossoms and other parts of the plant which are used to make variety, must be gathered at the time when they are in the most proper condition.

As these collections are made, the leaves should be at once laid between the leaves of a book; and, as soon as possible after, subjected to a certain amount of pressure. A large number of leaves should be gathered in preference to a few, and care must be taken to select those that are quite perfect, as, unless the specimens are perfect, the result will not be satisfactory; indeed, such care is necessary in this particular, that, even a scratch or broken edge, or a blotch or small perforation, will render the skeleton imperfect. The leaves must also be well matured (young leaves should be, with few exceptions, entirely rejected), and they should be picked from the lower part of the branch, not at the top, where they are not perfectly developed. Notice, too, whether, from the effects of the sun and wind, the edges are curled or otherwise imperfect; and those that have a tough, leathery texture, will not answer. A good plan for determining the state of a leaf is to hold it up to the light, when a defect is very readily seen. Evergreens are good, and may be picked late in the Autumn, though due regard

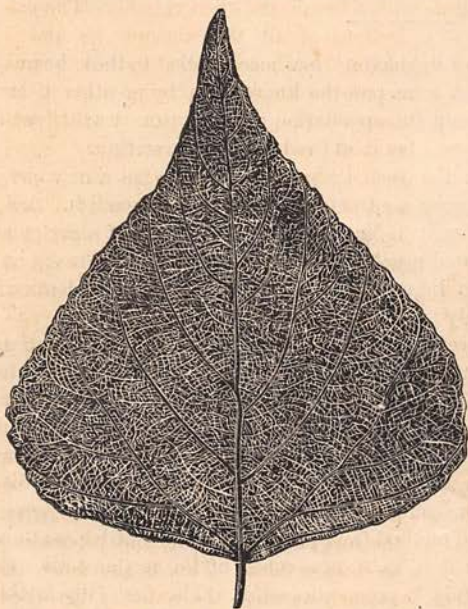


Fig. 1. Leaf of Poplar.

must be had to the age of the leaf. It is almost impossible to give a list of leaves available for this purpose, as the number is "legion." We will suggest a few, however, and beyond that, the woods, fields, gardens, and green-houses will constantly afford fresh subjects. All poplar leaves may be said to be easy to make; the silver poplar, Fig. 2, is especially so; the aspen, also, Fig. 3. The apple and pear of the orchard, the crab-apple of the woods, and the various ivies, Fig. 5, are as beautiful as easy. The willow, Fig. 8, requires some care, as it is very delicate; gathered early, it decays quickly. The maple, another exceedingly beautiful leaf, must be gathered young, and carefully macerated; watching it closely, and cleaning

with a stiff brush and the tapping motion. The Camellia, Orange, and Lemon, Abutilon, Wisteria, and some Rose leaves, form a fine addition; also, Holly, Lilac, and Honeysuckle. Various seed-vessels are extremely beautiful, and easily prepared; but they must be treated by themselves. The Stramonium, Garden Poppy, Winter Cherries, Thorn Apple, Fig. 4, the Wild Poppy, Canterbury Bell, the Columbine, African Hibiscus, etc., are all lovely, when well prepared and gracefully arranged.

Scotch Grass and Ferns, and many of our wild, as well as cultivated grasses, Ferns and Lycopodiums, when bleached (after growing brown in the fall), are lovely. Take, also, brown, dry, and well-formed twigs and branches of delicate trees, and bleach them perfectly white, as additions to some of the stemless leaves, and seed-vessels.

Another charming addition to such a collection is a quantity of thistle-down, which must be gathered into little bunches, and placed within a clover-leaf; first touching the base with a drop of size or paste, and fastening the leaves around. Another object which produces a light and fine effect are those seed-vessels, which contain downy seed, and are of small size; such as the Lettuce, Cacalia, and many other garden and wild flowers, which may be secured before the seed is carried away by the wind. After gathering, either paint with flake-white, or bleach by applying chloride of lime with a brush, and then rinsing. The collections of all the various specimens



Fig. 2. Silver Poplar.

having been made, next proceed to macerate the leaves, by placing them in an open vessel,—a tub or pan, or other convenient receptacle, covering several inches above the leaves with rain water, and placing in the open air and full sunlight. Place a pane or two of glass, or a light china plate over them, with a weight sufficient to keep them well down in the water, the loss of which by evaporation, must be made up, by adding a new supply from time to time, as required. In about two weeks they may be examined, and, if any are found soft and pulpy, these must be removed. After this, those that remain should be examined once or twice a week, removing the soft ones each time, and proceeding to cleanse them. This is the most unpleasant part of the entire operation, inasmuch as when the water is disturbed for the purpose of examination, the odor of the decaying vegetable matter is

most unpleasant, and the leaves themselves are absolutely so disgusting in their filthy sliminess, that if it were not for the exquisitely beautiful results to be accomplished by persevering in this unpleasant operation, one would determine at once to "have done with it." But it is so well worth all the disagreeable parts of the experiment to possess in the end a collection of those gossamer leaves, that we feel "in duty bound" to urge upon our readers the importance of persevering in this work, which, we can assure them, they will never regret. After arriving at this stage of the

proceeding, the finding the leaf in a pulpy condition, it is to be removed to a vessel or basin of clear water, which should be done most carefully, to prevent breaking or marring them, and this is best accomplished by slipping a card beneath the leaf, and causing it to float upon it, by leaning the vessel to one side, and inducing the leaf to float to the deepest part of the water,

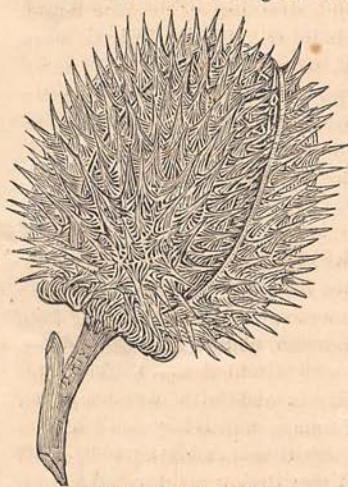


Fig. 4. Thorn Apple.

when it may be easily rested upon the card, and thus removed. Then, when immersed in the basin of clear water, it will float off uninjured. Without using this precaution, the typo, in the art of skeletonizing, will be almost certain to allow the leaves to break by their own weight.

The cleaning part of the operation now commences, for which, two or three brushes and a sharp-pointed knife are necessary; a soft, but thick camel's-hair brush, a stiff bristle brush, and a tooth brush. A leaf is lifted out of the water upon a card, and slid off upon a piece of smooth glass, or, perhaps, floated directly upon the glass; then, with the soft brush gently passed over the surface, all the pulp is removed, aiding the brushing with a stream of water, poured carefully



Fig. 3. Aspen.

over. Slip the leaf again into the water, turn it, and again float upon the glass, cleaning the opposite side in the same manner. The green surface must be entirely removed, until nothing but the skeleton of fibrous veins remain. If this is not accomplished by using merely the soft brush, the stiffer one, or the tooth

brush must be applied; and in case of some strong leaves, a sort of *scrubbing* becomes necessary, and does not injure the texture of the skeleton, but this is rare. The motion used in cleaning must not be a sweeping one, but rather a downward tapping, which breaks up the connection of the epidermis, without destroying the fibers. As the leaves are cleaned, they must be immersed in another basin of clear water, and left until the remainder are all cleansed, or until a convenient season arrives for bleaching them. This, however, should be done as soon after the cleansing as possible.

Some experienced operators prefer the "Quick Method," as it is called, of preparing these skeleton leaves. This consists in using a caustic to destroy the epidermis of the leaf, and is used thus: Dissolve four ounces of sal-soda in one quart of boiling water, adding two ounces of air-slacked quick-lime, and boiling fifteen or twenty minutes. Allow this to cool, and, straining off the clear liquid, boil it again, and add the leaves, continuing to boil briskly for an hour or more, adding boiling water if required. Remove a leaf, and put it into a vessel of water,

rubbing it gently with the fingers; if the epidermis and parenchyma separate easily, the remainder of the leaves may be removed; but if not, the boiling in the lye must be still further continued.

By either process, the leaves are now ready for the bleaching, which is done in various ways. The best, perhaps, is with a solution of chloride of lime, and immersing them, for a day or two, in a covered glass dish, placed in a dark closet, covering closely with a folded towel. The solution of chloride lime is made with one table-spoonful of chloride of lime in a quart of water, adding a few grains of citric acid, shaking well, until entirely dissolved, then decanting the clear liquid, and bottling for use.

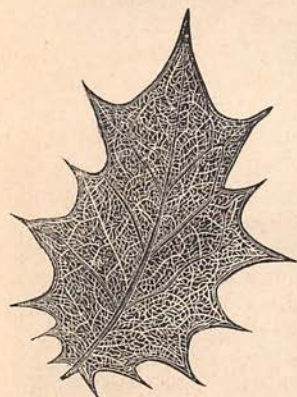


Fig. 6. Holly.

Some experienced operators prefer using chloride of soda as a finer preparation. Any scientific druggist will be able to prepare a fine solution of this, but for those who have not the opportunity of obtaining the article already prepared, we give the formula, as furnished us by a practical and successful pharmacist:



Fig. 5. Ivy.



Fig. 7. Group of Skeleton Leaves for a Glass Shade.

Obtain twelve ounces of carbonate of soda, chlorinated lime, six ounces, water, three quarts; dissolve the soda in a pint and a half of water, with the aid of heat; triturate the lime gradually with water, until a smooth, creamy liquid is formed; into this stir the remainder of the water, and put aside for twelve hours, until perfectly settled.

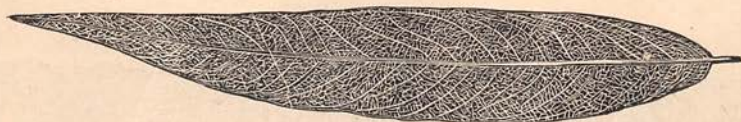


Fig. 8. Willow Leaf.

The following day, pour off the clear liquid, and turn the residue into a muslin bag to drain, adding a little water from time to time. When sufficient liquid has passed off to make altogether two quarts, mix with it the solution of carbonate of soda, stirring it until thoroughly blended. Transfer this mixture to a funnel, lined with paper, and allow it to drain until five pints of liquid have percolated through the paper. Pour this into an opaque bottle, which, keep tightly corked.

When using this bleaching fluid, which is extremely powerful, it should be diluted with from three to six times the quantity of water (soft), according to the texture of the leaves to be bleached.

After bleaching the leaves, by either process, they should be placed in a vessel of clear, cool water, for twenty-four hours, floated off upon a card, and turned over upon a soft napkin, gently pressed with some old soft linen, until all moisture is absorbed, and then curled gracefully, or pressed between the leaves of an old book, under pressure. They are now sufficiently strong to bear handling, with ordinary care, and can be arranged to suit the taste, either on a stand under a glass shade, or in a deep recess frame. In case the latter mode is adopted, the recess should be lined with dark-colored velvet. A black cross, covered with these leaves, is a lovely object; a beautiful arrangement of these leaves, seed-vessels, etc., are shown in the illustration; and it is very beautiful at the base of a cross, or in a frame. In the former, a delicate vine of Ivy should extend from it up over the body and arms of the cross.

We would observe, before closing, that leaves containing tannin should never be placed with others. The Oak, Hazel, and many others, are of this class. A method sometimes adopted with some of this class, the oak especially, is to place a number of the caddis worms with them, which eat away all the soft green part of the leaf, leaving the skeleton entire.

Holly leaves are beautiful, but must be also prepared alone, on account of the spines. Ferns and fine grasses are very difficult to arrange, as their feathery fronds are liable to curl, and must be most carefully coaxed into position. The best mode of accomplishing this part of the business, is to float the leaves off

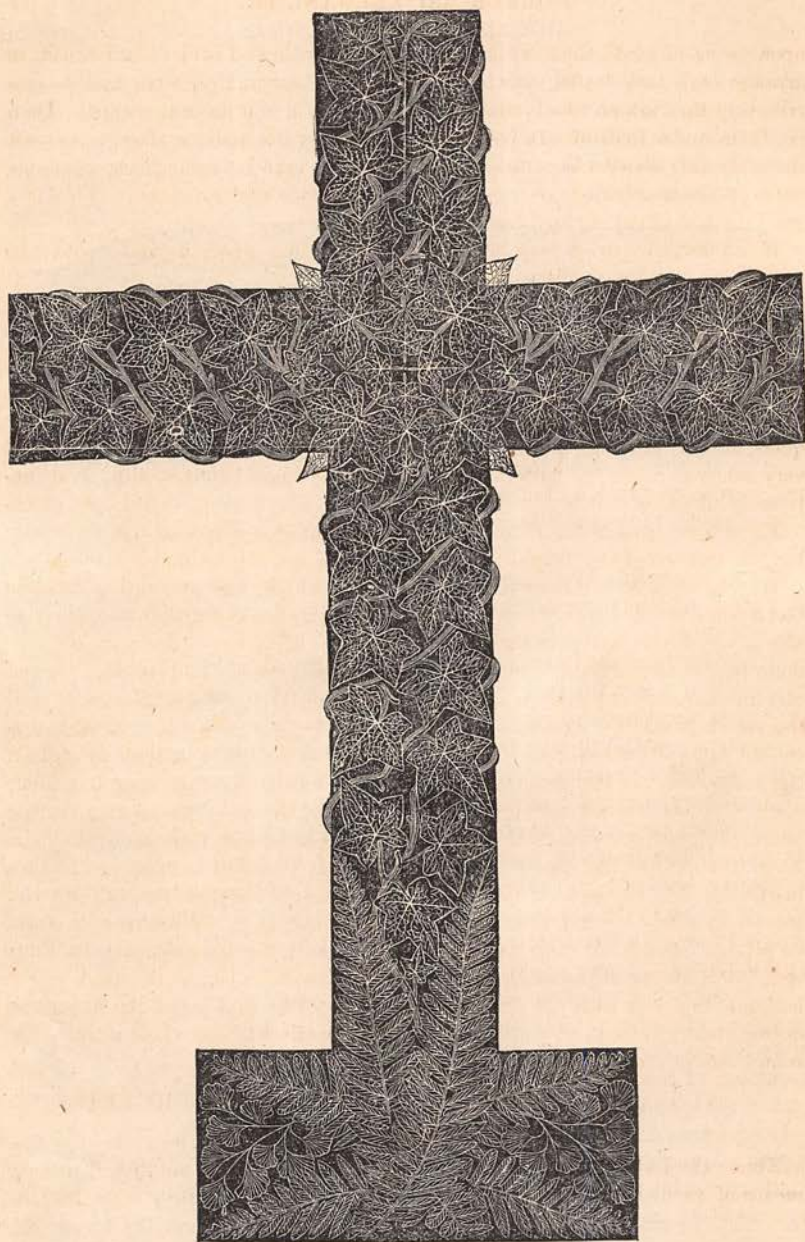


Fig. 9. An Ivy-Leaf Cross. Design in Skeleton Leaves.

upon pieces of card; then, while damp, with a needle and camel's-hair brush, so arrange each tiny leaflet, placing the sprays in natural position, and so distributing the various fronds that they form graceful and natural groups. Then lay them under folds of soft paper, pressing gently upon the surface, to extract the moisture; as soon as sufficiently dry, lay each card between sheets of tissue-paper, place newspapers over and under, and place under weights. This is a good method of drying any fine leaves.

When dry, the papers may be removed by pressing upon the under side, and raising the edges with the point of a knife.

Clover-leaves, of various sizes, will be found to form beautiful bells, imitating Lily of the Valley, by fastening the edges together with a white stamen in the center. Very small ones are necessary for this purpose. The large ones, used singly, may be made to appear like Lilies, Campanula, etc.

The long feather-like grasses, when bleached, are a fine addition to these bouquets, and, by placing parts of them as centers, with certain small leaves around very many varieties of flowers and buds can be imitated, that will prove extremely effective.

These arrangements of Phantom flowers are not only charming in themselves, but, on account of the difficulty in making them, are of inestimable value.

We introduce here a beautiful design, Fig. 9, which is constructed as follows: Get a plain, wooden cross made in form like the one here figured, but of as large size as you choose, and cover it with black velvet. This part of the work must be done very neatly, indeed. The velvet must be cut exactly and evenly. A correct measurement should be made, previously, of the width required, and then the velvet should be stretched, tightly and evenly, over the wood. No wrinkles should ruffle the flat surface, and this blemish you will find difficult to avoid if the material is not cut straight, and if the *right way of the stuff*—that is, the selvedge way—is not taken for the length. When the cross is ready for further adornment, twine a wreath of ivy-leaves around it, and let ferns lie at the base. Now, how can this be done? Twigs won't bend; bleached branches will be too brittle for this purpose. We must have recourse to a little deception. Get some very coarse crochet cotton, and stiffen it with gum. When dry, this will be pliable enough for your purposes, and will suit the requirement admirably well. Put the would-be stalk half way up the middle rib, at the back of the leaf, and fasten it with the dissolved isinglass. The making of the wreath requires great nicety, as you will perceive, but the effect of the whole work, when completed, is very ornamental, indeed.

AUTUMN LEAVES.—PRESERVATION.—PRETTY ARRANGEMENTS.

Those who have experimented in pressing and preserving autumn leaves, by means of varnishing, ironing, etc., are aware of the fact of their work proving

unsatisfactory, from the fact of their changing color, becoming spotted, curling at the edges, etc.

Now, for the past year or two, we have followed a different course; and our success has been so signal, that we feel glad to mention our method to our readers, in hopes of their testing it with as much satisfaction as we have done.

As soon as the trees begin to change their livery in the Autumn, begin making collections of all the various colors and shades of color, as the leaves gathered early always retain their color the longest. Gather as large a supply as possible, as it is always desirable to have a large number, and good variety, from which to make selections. Large leaves work up well on large panels; such as folding-screens, tables, etc., in imitation of Japanese work; and small leaves and sprays are valuable for fine work, and also for bouquets.

Old books are best as a receptacle for drying. We use old Patent Office Report books, and others of similar character; and some files of old newspapers, and magazines are invaluable. "Blank-book" paper is too stiff to answer well, still such can be made available in case of necessity. Commence placing the leaves at the back part of the book, laying each one smoothly, and never allowing them to touch each other, nor placing too many on one page; turn five or six pages upon these, and place another layer; continuing this until the book is full. Then place in a cool, dry place, under a heavy weight for twenty-four hours, or until the following day, when remove to dry books, and again place under pressure as before. This change is made three times in all, and after the last, they remain in press for several days, when they will be found in beautiful condition, and ready to arrange.

Then procure some cake-wax, such as is used for "fruit molding;" put it in a vessel, and set that in a pan of water upon the stove; when melted, add to it a few drops of turpentine or fir balsam, in order to render the wax pliable; by which means, the leaves can be bent into any form desired. If the wax is in the proper condition, the process may be continued, and this is best ascertained by dipping a leaf and drawing it over the edge of the pan upon both sides; hold it up by the stem with the face up, horizontally, when, if the wax is at right temperature, the leaf will appear as if newly varnished; if too hot, it will shrivel; if too cold, will cool in lumps, and present a dull, rough appearance. When the wax is made of proper temperature, by more or less heat, proceed to dip the leaves one by one, or spray by spray, and holding each until slightly cool; then placing upon newspapers to harden perfectly. These will present the natural appearance of the leaf; but, if a glossy surface is desired for any of them, they may receive a thin coat of Demar varnish, applied with a camel's-hair brush.

A friend writes us as follows of some pretty arrangements, which have been made successfully by her:

"To arrange single leaves into bouquets, get green thread wire, and cut into

pieces as long as you wish, for stems; break the stem nearly off the leaf, then pass the end of the wire through the bottom of the leaf; draw it through about an inch, then bend it down, and twist around the remaining stem and long wire, so as to hold the leaf firmly. After the leaves are fixed, arrange them in bouquets with a few pressed ferns; these will be pretty for your small vases. For large bouquets, use large sprays of leaves, sumac and ferns, mix a few dried or crystallized grasses and grain, black alder, black brier and bittersweet berries, and you will have as handsome bouquets for your stands and mantels as you could wish. Small clusters of autumn leaves and ferns prettily arranged on the picture-cords look nicely. Blackberry vines twined on the cords and left to hang gracefully around the picture-frame, with a cluster of bright berries and ferns here and there, are beautiful. A butterfly on a cluster of ferns is pretty on picture-cords. A corner-bracket draped with Spanish moss may be filled with autumn leaves, and two or three butterflies among them. Ferns filled in around a bracket form a pretty background for a vase of berries and leaves. You can make pretty lambrequins by pinning autumn leaves and ferns in graceful forms on your lace curtains; and you can ornament your white shades with them in the same manner.

Another pretty ornament is made of sticks about a foot high; take three, and cross to form a rustic stand, cover them with gray moss and a few berries and leaves; set a bird's nest in the hollow between the sticks, then get a pretty stuffed bird and set it on the nest.

To make anchors, crosses, stars, and wreaths, cut the forms out of pasteboard, and then sew autumn leaves on them, arranging the different colors and sizes prettily; these are very pretty to use in a great many ways. Sometimes we cut the centers of the stars out and use for a picture-frame, inserting a photograph or a small picture. They are odd and pretty.

The best time to gather ferns for winter use is September and October, as then the frost turns them white, and you can get them from deepest green to almost white, and they add so much to winter decoration. Also, collect all kinds of wild grasses, of which you will find a great variety, and quantities of autumn berries. A person of taste can think of many ways to arrange these bright treasures of Autumn.

HOW TO ARRANGE AUTUMN LEAVES.

Take a piece of Bristol-board about 7 x 9 inches, and arrange a group of leaves and ferns upon it; sew them on, neatly covering all the stitches with the leaves, and finish at the bottom with a spray of tiny leaves; frame in a passe-partout, and you will find it as handsome as a painting. Another way is to take a sheet of Bristol-board and cover with black velveteen; get a small brown or black straw basket, such as are used for wax fruit and flowers; cut into and glue one-half on the velveteen, then fill with the brightest leaves, sumac and ferns, grasses and

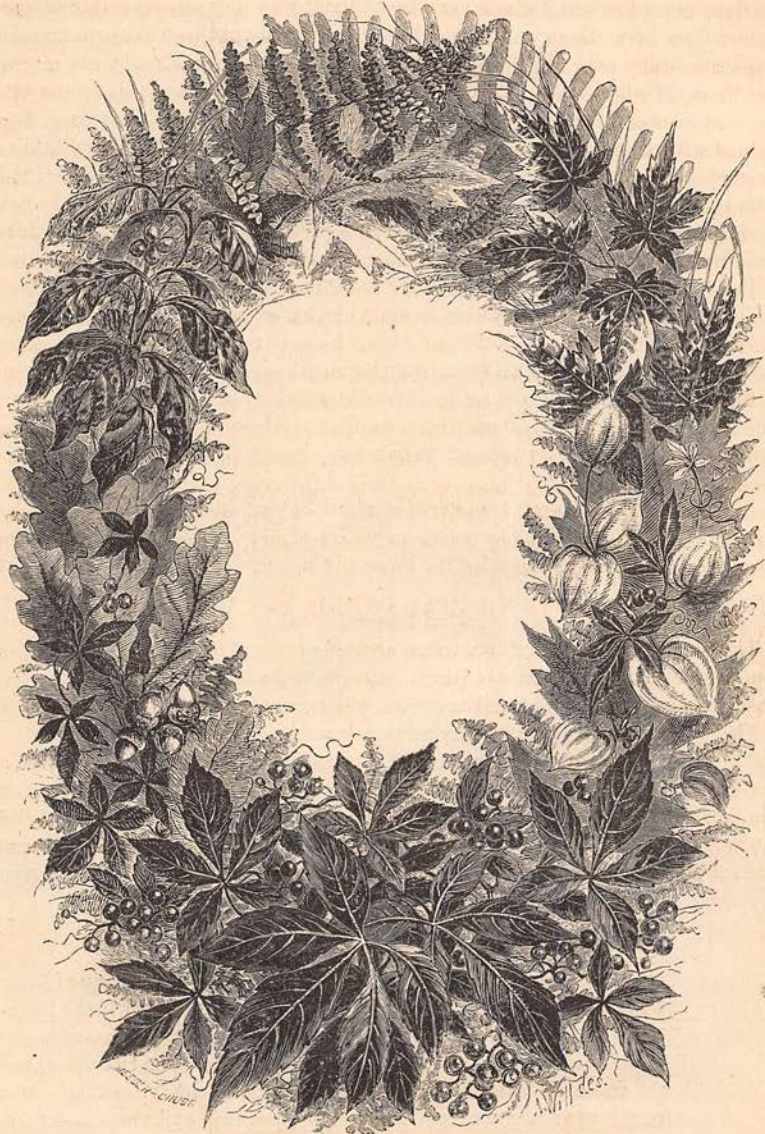


Fig. 10. Wreath of Autumn Leaves.

berries; get a few small vines, such as you will find in the woods, and preserve them; then twine them around the handle of the basket, and arrange others to slope gracefully over the sides; frame in a deep frame, and it will win admiration from all who see it. Another ornament that my friends admired, last Winter, was a cross of black walnut, with carved base about fourteen inches high, twined with a wreath of autumn leaves, berries and green moss, which you can procure at the florist's. The cross, you can get a carpenter to make for you. Then take your smallest leaves—I did not use any over an inch long—take a piece of green thread wire, about three-quarters of a yard long, for the formation of the wreath; then take pieces of the wire about one and a half inches long, for stems to the leaves; prepare them as already described. When ready, commence by fastening a cluster of the moss on one end of the long wire, with a small piece; then arrange the leaves on the long wire by twisting their wire-stems around the long wire, taking care to bring the leaf near enough to the foundation wire so that when the next is put on it will hide the stem of the first. Continue in this way, arranging the colors with care, and interspersing a little moss here and there to give a good effect. When done, fasten to the cross by means of small black pins, twining the wreath around the cross, and bending the leaves so they will look graceful. At the base of the cross, arrange moss, berries and leaves; also, fasten a spray of leaves and moss near the ends of the arms of the cross, so as to slope prettily, and the cross is finished."

IMITATION OF JAPANESE INLAID WORK.

This method of decorating various articles of wood is not new, in itself, but some additional improvements which have been made to it, will, perhaps, be at least somewhat novel to a portion of our readers; and, we hope, interesting to all.

The work consists in fastening upon a smooth wooden surface, in pleasing and graceful forms (*a la Japonaise*), variously-shaped and colored leaves, which have been subjected to a heavy pressure, until perfectly flat and smooth; and which, after the surface has been so varnished and polished as to present a face as smooth and hard as glass, will appear as if the whole were one unbroken surface; which is the high perfection of art in the Japanese work.

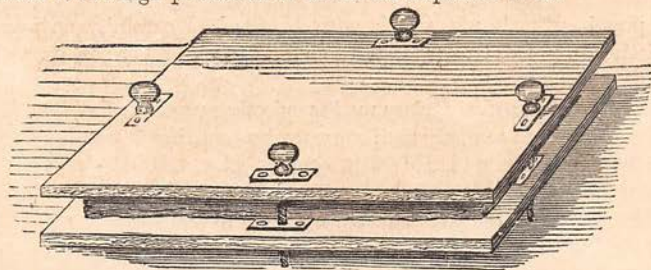


Fig. 11. Botanist's Press.

All persons who carry the collecting and pressing of leaves to any extent, should provide themselves with the simple contrivance called, "The Botanical Press;" and with such a convenience, a large number of leaves can be collected and prepared for this purpose, in a very short time. The number, colors, and size, should be as varied and extensive as possible, in order to have a sufficient store from which to make selections; and, in case of extensive borders, a number of one size and kind must be prepared.

By the application of these pressed leaves, many worn and defaced articles, such as cabinets, boxes, cases, frames, and sets of bed-room furniture, may be renovated and made to appear like rich inlaid wood.

In forming the patterns upon the wood, regard must be had not only to the form and size of the leaves, but also to the various colors and shades of each particular piece, as it is applied, in order to produce that harmony or contrast which is so effective.

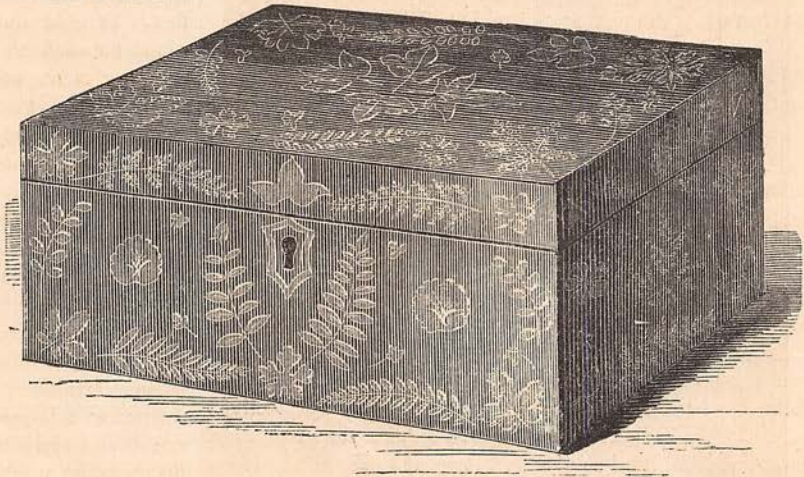


Fig. 12. Fancy Box.

After pressing the leaves, which must be handled carefully on account of their brittleness, proceed to arrange them in figures or borders, on a sheet of white paper.

Then, having the wooden surface made perfectly smooth and stained in imitation of ebony, proceed to apply each separate leaf, raising it carefully from the paper, and painting the underside with *very thin* glue; should the stems remain and appear too thick, split off the under section carefully with a *sharp* knife. Having thus arranged the entire design upon one flat side, lay a weight upon it until dry; using the precaution to place a piece of oiled paper over the work, to prevent its adhering and being dragged up, when the weight is removed.

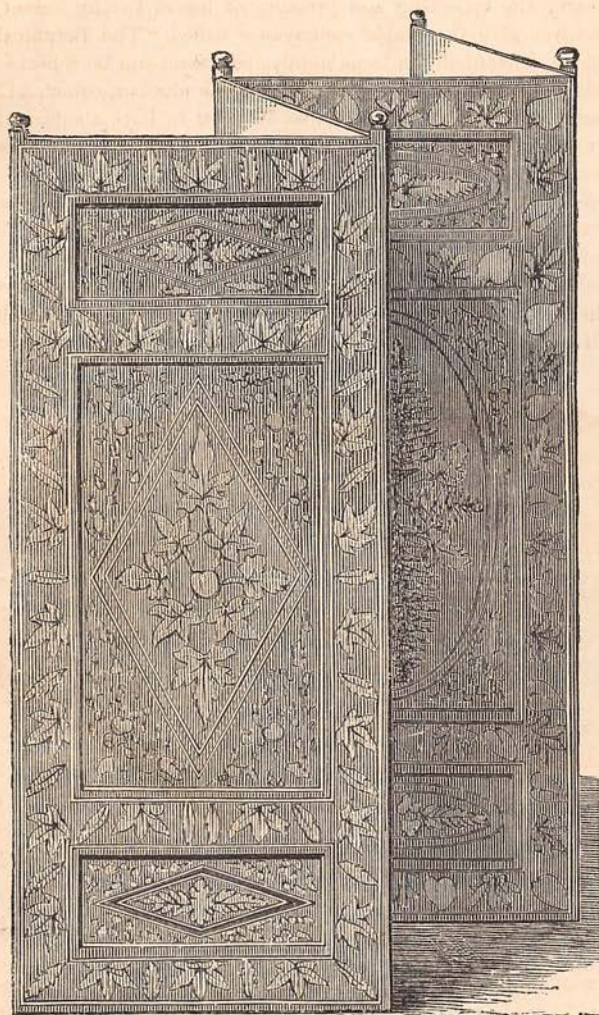


Fig. 13. Screen Decorated with Leaf-Work.

light unpleasant. Plain pine wood sawed in four panels, six feet seven inches high by two feet four inches wide, united with hinges and placed upon castors, it is not a costly "affair" in the commencement; but after the aforesaid ornamentation

After the whole is done and dry, wipe off any glue which may have oozed from beneath the leaves, and finish with a coat of best Copal varnish. In some cases a little transparent color will improve certain parts, if "touched up" carefully, and lines or bands of gold and color between the designs, as shown in the screen, Fig. 13; which, as an example of large leaf work, is perhaps one of the most elegant articles that could be desired; and such a folding-screen is one of the most useful and imposing articles of furniture a house can contain; if upon castors, easily moved from place to place, and always ready to be placed in front of a bed, or in some other position where privacy is desired, or a glaze of

is finished, upon a finely-stained ground, with lines of gilding and color, it becomes a piece of rich and elegant furniture. So, likewise, the wash-stand, Fig. 14, which idea may be carried out upon the bureau, head and foot board of bed, chairs and little stand, thus changing a plain, shabby set of bed-room furniture into something more than merely tasteful, even elegant. We assure our readers the result is well worth all the trouble, time and patience, expended upon it.

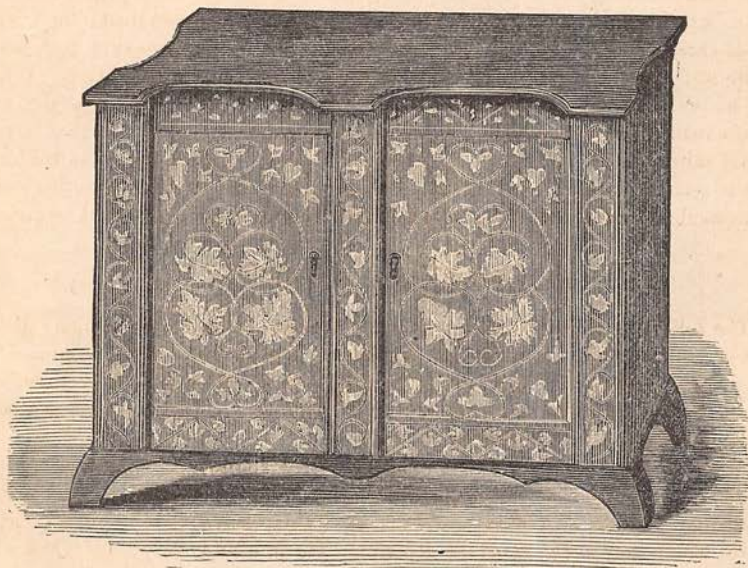


Fig. 14. Wash-Stand.

ORNAMENTATION WITH INDIA INK.

The application of this mode of ornamentation is almost universal, being adapted to the surface of a center-table, to that of a paper-cutter, or card-case.

The wood for this purpose should be of close grain, and hard, even surface, such as satin-wood, *white* maple, white poplar, some specimens of pine, etc.; but with care any light surface may be made to answer. The design is first drawn in outline with a lead pencil, very lightly; the white parts filled in with cake white, the black with repeated coats of India ink, and the intermediate shades with sepia and shades of gray. Certain portions are left in the natural shades of the wood, which point must be decided by the taste of the artist. We have recently colored an oval table in this way, forming one of the most exquisite articles of furniture, that can be imagined. A monogram or some other figure or device may be placed in the center.

After painting in the colors with camel's-hair brushes, the fine pencilings and outlines may be gone over with a mathematical pen.

The most difficult part of the work is in the finishing. This is done, only upon the painted parts, when there is sufficient skill to admit of it; but for the mere amateur, it will, perhaps, be best to paint the entire surface with fine Demar varnish, using the utmost care to lay it smoothly. When dry, give a second coat; let this dry, at least two days, in a place secure from dust; then, with great care, polish the surface, dipping a soft woolen, or chamois-skin pad, made quite wet, into finely pulverized pumice-stone, using only gentle friction. When the entire surface is thus gone over, rinse all the powder off thoroughly; dry, and again varnish and polish; proceed thus, until a surface is obtained that is perfectly mirror-like; then, give a final coat of varnish. Use great care in rubbing, not to reach the paint beneath the varnish, as this would ruin the entire work. This mode of painting will be found exquisite upon white card-board, or paper.

DRYING FLOWERS.

The following directions for preserving flowers, we have seen in many different periodicals, both European and American; but, as the method recommended by a correspondent of "The Ladies' Floral Cabinet" (Rev. Ed. Huber), embodies all that the various journals have published, we copy his method precisely as he has given it in that journal:

"In some parts of Germany, the business of drying flowers is extensively carried on, and they have become quite an important article of export. Thousands of tasteful bouquets, wreaths, and baskets of these flowers, are annually sent to Paris, where they are in constant demand. The process is very simple, and with a little experience, almost any one may successfully dry flowers, and keep them in a state of perfection for a long time.

For a first trial, take a common cigar-box, or any box of convenient size. You may also bore several holes in the bottom, and over these holes paste strong stiff paper.

The next thing of importance is the preparation of the sand. Fine river-sand, baked thoroughly dry, is the best adapted to this purpose. The leaves of many flowers are so glutinous, that sand adheres to them with great tenacity, which will spoil the dried specimens. To prevent this, the sand is prepared in the following manner:—To twelve and one-half pounds of well dried or baked sand, take one ounce of stearin. Put the sand in a large flat pan over a good fire, heat it to such a degree that a small piece of stearin will immediately melt on it (the stearin should be scraped into fine shavings); now scatter over one or two teaspoonfuls of it on the heated sand, being careful to stir the whole thoroughly and constantly. After the first portion has been well absorbed by the sand, add another spoonful, and so on until the whole has been added. This requires care

and some patience; do not get tired of stirring, and do not take the pan from the fire until every grain has received its proper share of stearin.

Now pick out the flowers you wish to dry; they should be free from dew or any moisture; through a fine sieve, sift a layer of sand a quarter of an inch deep into the box; now, lay carefully as many flowers and leaves on the sand as you can; the space between the larger flowers may be filled up by smaller ones; on

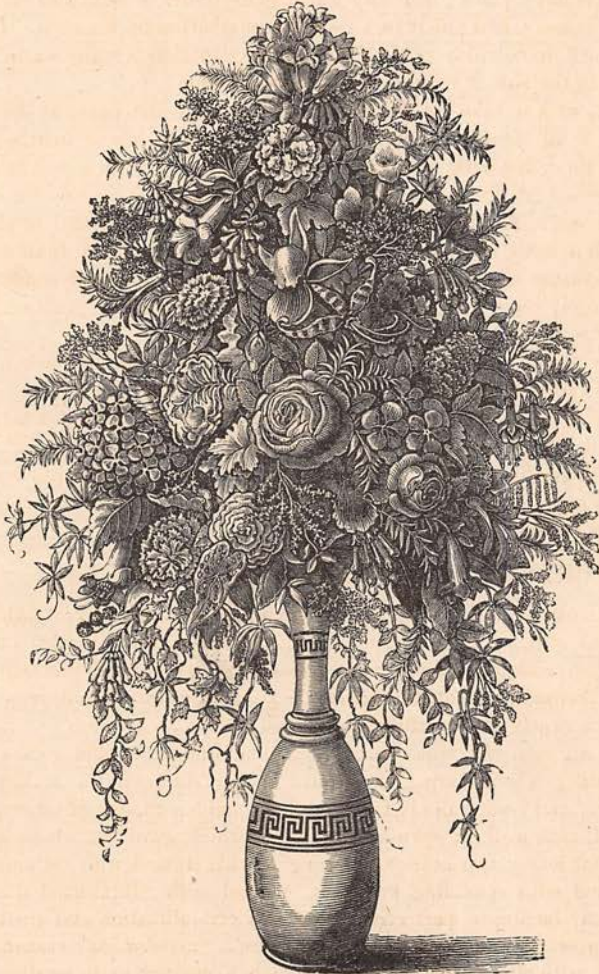


Fig. 15. Bouquet of Dried Flowers.

this layer of flowers, carefully sift another layer of sand; do not press the sand down with your hands, this would spoil the natural shape of the flowers; but knock gently, with your fingers, on the sides and bottom of the box, until every little space, between and under the flowers, is well filled up; then put in another layer of flowers, and proceed as before, until the box is full. Tie down the lid with good strong cord, and put the box in a warm place. If, in your own house, there is not a place constantly warm, place under or near a stove, take the box to your baker's, and put it in a good warm position on his oven. In two to four days, the flowers will be perfectly dry, if the situation is really warm. When only placed in the sun, it requires a much longer time.

When you wish to take out the flowers, cut through the paper at the bottom, and let the sand slowly run out. The flowers at first are so brittle that you cannot take them out without breaking them; put the box in a cool, moist place in a cellar or a ditch, for several hours; you may then safely remove the contents.

Do not expect to find every flower perfect; some will be spoiled in shape and color. With a little experience, you will soon learn to know that, and leave them out in future trials. But others, you will find in splendid condition, and these will amply repay you for all your trouble. After some practice, you will learn to dry your favorites on a larger scale.

These flowers are very beautiful for winter bouquets, and will look well for a long time, if protected from dust and the rays of the sun.

With flowers furnished with long, slender stems and leaves, you may always be successful. Scabiosa, Pinks, Primulas, Forget-me-nots, Honeysuckles, Pansies, Sweet Peas, etc., are very reliable, but experience will teach you best which to select. Flowers with thick, full corolla, also Tulips, Hyacinths, etc., are entirely useless for this purpose."

CRYSTALLIZING GRASSES, FERNS, ETC.

Although colored and crystallized grasses, etc., are strongly objected to by many persons, still, we must admit, that in some cases, these methods of changing the faded, and generally, somber hues of dried natural productions, are capable of producing beautiful effects. To obtain this result, however, the work must be neatly and carefully prosecuted.

We have all seen the appearance of ground, and trees, and rocks, on some winter morning when, during the hours of our slumber, the soft snow had quietly fallen, and been quickly followed by a sudden change of atmosphere to intense cold, with a slight sprinkling of sleet, which gave the whole landscape before us that lovely appearance of being thickly dusted with "diamond powder," gemmed with sparkling brilliants, crusted with "liquidized diamonds." Well, this may be almost perfectly imitated by crystallization and frosting, and we must confess we consider it, in many cases, a "*decided improvement.*" This crystallizing with alum may be done in such a manner as to produce several

kinds of crystals. If alum is dissolved in cold water, it will take about fifteen parts of water to one of alum, or a pint of water to an ounce of pure alum; but, by dissolving in boiling water, the pint of water will take up a pound of alum, and it is by this process that the crystals are formed, and, herein is where many persons fail; that is, they attempt to crystallize by dissolving only the amount of alum that cold water will take; whereas, the proper method is to continue adding alum until a "*saturated solution*" is formed (or it will dissolve no more), whenever large and heavy masses of crystal are desired; but if delicate and well-defined small crystals are formed, make a boiling solution of one pint of water and only an ounce or so of alum, which will cover the objects placed in it, while hot, with perfect crystals when it becomes cold. For an ordinary collection of grasses and ferns, sufficient for two bouquets, or a basket, take a pound of alum and one gallon of water; boil, until dissolved, and when *cool*, having tied the grass in small bundles, pour the solution of alum into a glazed jar or basin, and placing sticks across the rim, from side to side, suspend the bunches from these so that they hang down, and are immersed in the water; then place the jar in a safe place, where it will not be disturbed for several hours, or, perhaps, during a night.

Do not expect that the crystals will be always formed as soon as the solution becomes cold, for it may be twelve or fifteen hours, perhaps even longer, before the deposit commences; this depends on the temperature of the room and other causes. Frequently those crystals most slowly deposited are the most perfect and brilliant, so we may feel that "patient waiting is no loss." If you should grow impatient, however, and there is cause for haste, add more alum, dissolving a quarter of a pound of alum in a very little boiling water, and adding it to that in the jar. When the grasses, etc., appear sufficiently coated, remove and hang them up to drain, and dry off.

Slender grass should not be too heavily crystallized, as it causes them to bend too much to appear graceful; this, however, will be learned by experience.

It is sometimes desirable to give the crystals a frosty appearance; this is done by placing them before the fire where they will dry off rapidly, which will give them that white look, like crushed ice or frosted snow.

CRYSTALLIZED FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE.

Tie the flowers and leaves of various kinds, such as Violets, Pansies, Geraniums, Ivy, Myrtles, Ferns, etc., to stems of wire; or, if desired, fasten upon the bottom of shallow baskets or other receptacles, and dip them into a solution of alum that has become perfectly cold. The solution should be what is termed a "*saturated solution*;" that is, the water should dissolve all the alum it will. When the alum has formed a clear, light covering upon the surface of the flowers and leaves, and sufficient adheres to envelop everything with crystal



Fig. 16. Bouquet of Spring Flowers and Grasses.

drops, remove them with great care, and allow to drip for several hours, until perfectly dry, when the flowers will present the most charming appearance, and be lovely ornaments for any apartment. The baskets thus ornamented are very beautiful ornaments, and will long retain their first and lovely appearance.

COLORING GRASSES.



Fig. 17. Bouquet of Dried Grasses.

In making rustic pictures of various kinds, also in arranging bunches of autumn leaves, ferns and other "winter bouquets," it is sometimes desirable to add grasses as a means of producing that softness, which *fine foliage alone* is capable of imparting to any arrangement of flowers. These grasses may be dried in such a manner that a portion, at least, of their natural, vivid green and yellow coloring, may be retained, but it is impossible to preserve it perfectly; and as this lovely, natural color, is one of the most beautiful characteristics of a collection of winter leaves, etc., it becomes a matter of importance to imitate those bright tints of summer, which are so effective. To do this, we must have recourse to dyes of various shades and colors. Now, any one who has examined the beautiful collections of "winter bouquets," as they are called, which have added such brightness to our homes and public exhibitions during the past few years, must have observed the predominance of the shades of yellow, brown and russet, which, even though the arrangement may have been ever so tasteful, could not be perfectly satisfactory to an artistic eye, which always seeks for imposing contrasts or perfect harmony.

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Another striking feature in some of these flower arrangements, is a superabundance of the vivid green, and orange-brown dyed mosses, which is sent us from Germany; and this is a still greater mistake, as they are so exceedingly bright and unnatural, that they give an *artificial* appearance to that which should be simply natural.

The finest and most artistic effects are produced by the addition of *rose-shades*, contrasted with *palest* blue; scarlet, and the light golden tints of some natural grasses; greens of various shades, but never the glazing dyed colors in grasses, reserving these for the addition of *a few bright leaves*.

The best method of coloring grasses and leaves with flowers, also, is to merely dip them into the various spirituous solutions of aniline; these may be procured in many beautiful shades of red, blue, orange, purple, rose, etc., and the depth of color can be regulated by making the dye more or less strong by the addition of spirits of methyl. After removing from the dye, they must be lightly shaken out and exposed to the air, in order to dry off the spirit and remove any odor.

Another method of coloring certain parts is by using a pink saucer, which may be obtained from a druggist, and will color sufficient flowers for several bouquets; and this will produce a finer tint than the aniline; but for mauve, violet and purple, the anilines are preferable.

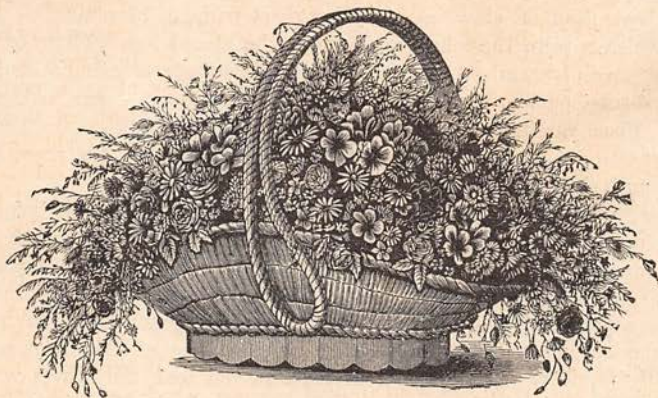


Fig. 18. Basket of Grasses and Dried Flowers.

In dyeing some grasses, it is necessary to bleach them, especially if they are of a deep, and yet disagreeable color. To do this, recourse is had to the chloride of lime, or properly speaking, chlorinated lime, taking two teaspoonfuls; and after wetting, and mashing out all lumps, dissolving in a quart of water, with a little "acetic acid" added, sufficient to produce a decided odor of chlorine, let it stand, and pour off the clear liquid, or strain through a tannery

with fine perforations; if kept for any time, decant into opaque bottles, and cork tightly. In this liquid, suspend or immerse the grasses until white, or almost so; for some grasses will not bleach to perfect whiteness, while others will do so in about ten or fifteen minutes. After bleaching in this manner, remove from the lime, rinse through clear water, and hang in the sun or air, until dry. If they are desired for bouquets, they should be placed in an upright position while damp, with the heads drooping, in order to attain a graceful curve.

In dyeing, the colors for grasses should properly be shades of green, brown, and gold color, applied in the same manner as those for

DYEING FLOWERS.

When the everlasting flowers (or "Immortelles" of the French) are of a homely color, it is desirable, perhaps, to dye them some pleasing shade; or, again, as they are generally in a natural state, of only a few colors, such as yellow, rose and white, and a variety is desirable in a collection, it is customary, in Europe, especially, to resort to coloring as a means of imparting brightness and beauty to a bouquet, or other "arrangement" of these flowers.

The Ammobium, White Acroclinium, Pearly Everlasting, Xeranthemum of one kind, and the white Gomphrena, are colorless in themselves, and, with some little preparation of cleansing, may be dyed without bleaching, or fading. Those which require the color changed must be placed in a solution of Castile (white) soap and warm water, with a little borax added; to an ounce and a half of shaved soap, putting one quart of water and a piece of borax as large as a filbert. Place the flowers in this while it is boiling hot, keeping them upon the stove for a half hour or so; then rinse in cold, clear water, repeating the process until the color is removed.

White flowers and grasses may be dyed with the aniline dyes, as before mentioned; or, for some shades, Brazil-wood, cudbear, cochineal, anetta, and other old-fashioned dyes may be used, but will not prove so clear and brilliant as the former. Some, too, may have the natural colors changed, spotted, striped, etc., by using acids, alum, lye and other agents, and for some touches of transparent colors, produce fine effects. In using the aniline dyes, all that is required is to mix the liquid or powder with boiling water, and soak the flowers or grasses in this until sufficiently dyed; or proceed according to the directions upon the package, substituting the flowers, etc., instead of the silk or other fabric for coloring, which directions are printed.

Ferns, for winter collections, should be carefully gathered, and immediately put under press, or placed in water; if, however, by any necessity this is impossible, and they become wilted, place them under water for a short time, when they will revive, and must be laid upon a soft towel or napkin until dried off somewhat; then placed in a book, and pressed, using care to change, each day.

SEA-MOSSES.

Albums, or certain portions of scrap-books, devoted to the preservation of these lovely sea-flowers, will be found a great acquisition to a "table collection" of interesting "knick-knacks," and afford a vast amount of pleasure, as well. The best time for collecting "Sea-Mosses and Grasses" is during July and August, and perhaps the early part of September. They should be gathered carefully, the utmost pains being taken not to break or tangle them. A tin box or pail with lid, should be filled with sea-water, and into this the specimens placed; as, if merely thrown into a basket, in a dry state, they will wilt and die very soon. When the tide is out farthest, visit the shore and search in all the little pools, among the rocks and in the nooks and crannies along the beach, turning over the collections of stones, shells, sand, etc., that have been thrown up by the waves, especially after a storm. When you return from your quest, take a basin of clear, fresh water, and carefully rinse each spray, passing the pieces back and forth gently, through the water; then, slipping a piece of card under each piece, float it off into another shallow pan or dish of clear, fresh water, to allow it to assume its natural form. When each tiny fiber and shred has washed up separately, take a piece of drawing-paper or fine Bristol-board, cut to the proper proportion and shape, and, slipping it beneath the spray, with a sharp-pointed instrument, lay every strand in proper position; cutting out all superabundant branches, and placing the various parts, so that a graceful, gossamer-like spray appears lying upon the white card-board. Then, raising the card, hold it up in a slanting position and pour off the water, using great care not to disturb or misplace the various thread-like branches. Let these cards dry off partially, and, while a little damp, lay soft folds of old linen or tissue-paper upon them and place under a moderate pressure. Examine them every day for one week, changing the papers or books used to absorb the moisture at least once each day; and when the specimens are large and rather thick, it may be necessary to repeat this twice a day during the first three days.

In separating and examining the weeds, there will be found some which are of a gummy or glutinous character; these must not be placed with the others, but dried upon cards in the air; then placed for a moment, so that the paper beneath them rest upon a plate of clear water, wiped or rather patted with a soft napkin and placed under a book or other light weight, until dry.

If any mosses or weeds are found that have not adhered to the paper while under pressure, remove them, and paint over the whole surface with Demar varnish or turpentine, with a little gum-mastic rubbed into it,—about one ounce of turpentine to two drams of gum.

The fine, fibrous mosses will be fit to remove to the album in about one week, but the heavier pieces require two, and sometimes three weeks to dry—very much depending upon attention to the changing of the papers. Some of the large and branching pieces may be dried without pressing, and arranged in vases.

Various other arrangements may be made of these lovely sea-flowers, in which taste and ingenuity may be extensively displayed. Crosses, lyres, harps, anchors, etc., can be formed of the fine parts, and with the addition of floss silk, zephyr, chenille, and a little "frosting," exquisite vines, with leaves and flowers, may be arranged, while with sand and shells, a piece of mirror and fragment of rocks, a lovely little piece may be easily formed, and will prove a fine addition to an album or a charming ornament for a shell or coral frame.

The lovely little Swiss baskets, sold at the floral and fancy stores, also form beautiful ornaments when filled with these exquisite sea-weeds. They are first cut in two, longitudinally, and fastened to a white card-board foundation, by touching the cut edges of sides and handle with strong gum-arabic mucilage, and fixing in the center of the card. When dry and finely fixed, arrange a background with the fine parts of the moss, fastened against the white card, forming a fine tracery of brown and purple "*grasses and ferns*," imitated with the weeds. Then fill in with the bright parts, formed into flowers and foliage, with the aid of scraps of "floss silk," zephyr and chenille, using tiny pieces as buds or berries, forming lovely little Moss-roses of the beautiful shades of rose, pink and green moss, pansies of the purplish and yellow colors, white flowers (by bleaching a few sprays with chloride of lime), pinks, geraniums, roses and various other flowers of the crimson shades; and long, feathery strands form fine flowers by twisting them into form and fastening with silk or fine wire; a few tiny shells may be added here and there, and some strands of the tangled weed, sand and minute shells, dusted with fine "diamond powder," and hung from the bottom or sides of the basket. A monogram, or the Christian name or initials, placed beneath, formed with the fine leaves of the mosses, makes a beautiful finish, and such a collection, framed in shells or coral, forms a charming addition to a tasteful room.

In arranging Sea-Mosses in a scrap-book, the beautiful enameled and painted shells, which are now imported from Europe, and sold at the fancy stores, form an appropriate and elegant addition; and, as they may be procured for a comparatively moderate price, we would recommend them as exceedingly satisfactory, thus applied.

WOOD-MOSSES.

Wood-Mosses and Lichens can also be used to beautiful advantage; and a friend, writing, thus describes some charming and inexpensive ornaments constructed out of the natural moss found in the forest:

"Mosses can be advantageously gathered in the woods at almost any season of the year. I found beautiful specimens the other day deep under the snow, but I generally succeed best in preserving the beauty of those collected in early summer or in November. You scarcely can have too great a variety either of lichens or mosses in this kind of fancy work. Gather such as are to be found

on old rail fences, decaying logs or the bodies of trees in moist, shady woods, and in patches under fallen forest-leaves. Let them dry in a dark, cool place. The body of your frame should be of wood, cut either square or oval, or it may

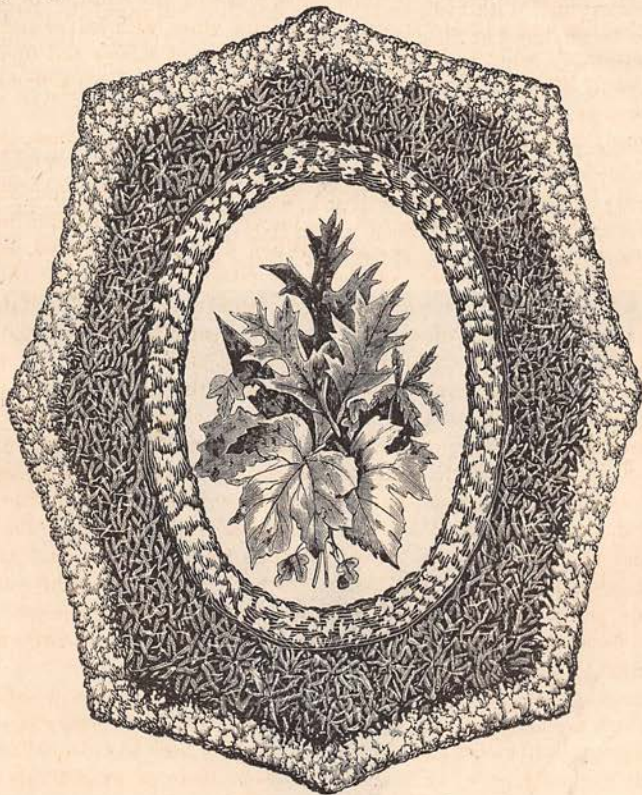


Fig. 19. Moss Frame.

be rectangular at its outer and oval at its inner edge; or better still, formed as found in our illustration. (About Christmas times, I generally have half-a-dozen at once cut out at the wood-turner's, at an expense of about fifteen cents each.) Next make a paste by stirring flour in cold water and cooking it very slightly, stirring all the time; leave it as thick as it can be to work well; apply it to the frame; select and paste on the moss according to your fancy, gradually covering the entire frame, and taking care not to press the moss down any more than is necessary. In putting on the moss and lichens, let them overlap each other as they do when growing, with various shades of green

blending together, and cool grays and pearly shell-forms creeping close upon the bright, emerald tips. Use, mainly, the low, flat varieties, and ornament with little groups of the taller sorts, introducing here and there a fern-like spray with its livelier green. With taste and delicate handling, an exquisite picture-frame may thus be produced at little trouble and almost no expense. For illuminated texts, paintings of flowers or autumnal leaves, these frames are peculiarly effective, though they look well on an engraving, or almost any style of small picture."

Thanking our correspondent for her suggestions, we introduce in this connection a lovely style of moss wall-bracket, which can be made large or small, and for hanging either upon the side-wall or in a corner. The top of the bracket can readily be cut from any soft wood, and a flat stick as long as the bracket is designed to be, securely fastened below it at the back at right angle, so as to

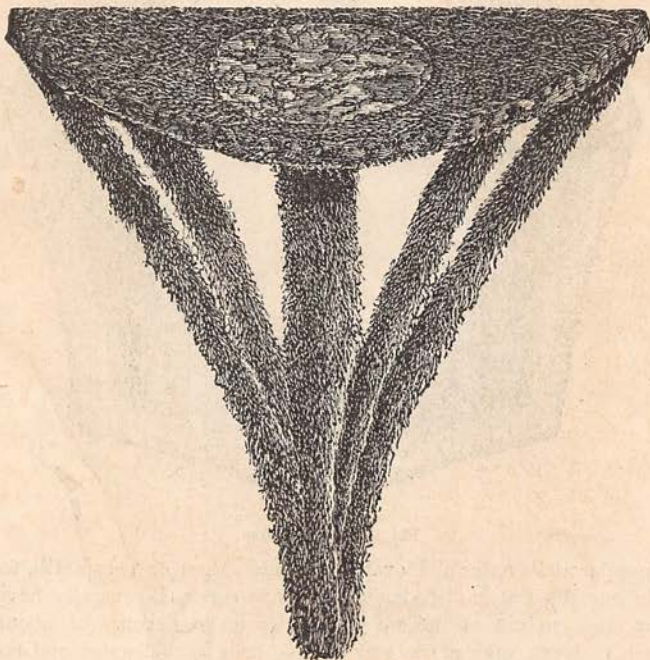


Fig. 20. Moss Bracket.

make the rear view of the frame-work not unlike a letter T. Next obtain a barrel-hoop or two, cut into proper lengths and fasten on as many of these pieces as taste may dictate, taking care to let each piece curve inward. These pieces should meet at the bottom of the brace, and their other ends be secured

at equal distances around the front of the shelf. When all are made firm, your bracket is ready to cover with moss, though for convenience it is well to cover the back brace before the front ones are put in place. The general directions

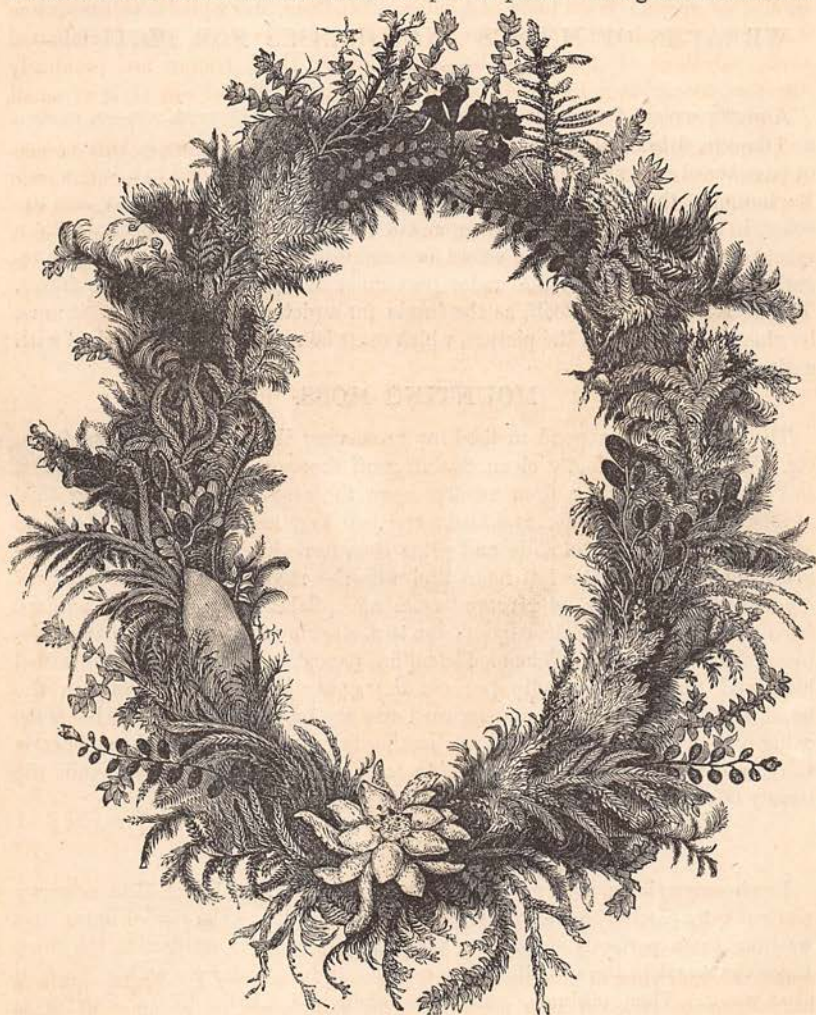


Fig. 21. Wreath of Mosses and Grasses for Picture-Frames.

given above, for covering picture-frames, will apply for the rest of the work. These moss-brackets have a charming effect when supporting a vase of graceful

grasses, or a growing ivy-plant, or a simple bouquet. In Summer they look well on the walls of vestibules or piazzas, and afford convenient places for depositing wild flowers, sprays of foliage, or any treasure collected in our rambles.

WREATHS OF MOSSES AND GRASSES FOR PICTURE-FRAMES.

A pretty wreath for picture-frames may be made of different grasses, mosses and flowers, dried and pressed between blotting-paper, and gummed on a piece of pasteboard corresponding to the frame of the picture intended to be wreathed. Beginning at the middle of the upper part, arrange, first, one half, and then the other, in such a manner that the stems of the grasses shall be covered. Care must be taken to arrange the colors harmoniously. The stems which come together in the middle of the under part must be covered with a large flower. The wreath may serve, itself, as the frame for a picture—in which case it must be glued on the edge of the picture, which must be mounted and furnished with a glass.

MOUNTING MOSS.

The following is a good method for preserving the leaves of mosses, ferns, etc. Wash them perfectly clean, draining off thoroughly and drying partially, so as to remain flexible; then arrange upon the center of a slide. Over this place a pane of clean glass, and fasten the two together by clamping or "clip." Then taking hold of the slide and glass thus united, with a pair of forceps or pliers, hold them in the left hand, and with the right, apply a little "jelly of glycerine," which may be procured from an optician's, *certainly*, and perhaps from other places, along the edges of the two, allowing it to run under the glass by capillary attraction. When sufficient has passed, having a spirit-lamp turned low, hold the forceps or clip (*we use a "spring clothes-pin"*) firmly in the hand, and pass it backward and forward over the lamp until the glycerine boils, using care not to crack the glass by heating too rapidly. Clean the slide carefully, and varnish with gold-size. Mosses, mounted in this way, retain the beauty of color far better than when simply dried.

SHELLS.

Fresh-water shells, such as muscles, snails, etc., may be bleached to a snowy whiteness by placing them for a few hours in a solution of chloride of lime; first washing them perfectly clean, then placing them in a jar containing the lime. Place the vessel in the sun, and when sufficiently bleached, remove, and wash in clear water. Then, taking a soft woolen cloth and a little oil and finely-powdered pumice-stone, proceed to polish the surface by continued rubbing; afterward finish with a gentle rubbing with chamois-skin, which will produce a snow-white shell with a highly enameled surface.

LEAF PHOTOGRAPHS.

A simple and effective method of taking leaf photographs is as follows: Procure a few cents worth of bi-chromate of potash, with which make a saturated solution. Pour some of the clear liquid into a shallow dish, and on it float a piece of letter-paper till it is thoroughly and evenly moistened, placing it in the dark to dry, when it should appear of a bright yellow color. On this, place the fern leaf or leaves; under it, a piece of soft black cloth and some folds of newspaper. Place this between two panes of glass, and secure with clamps (spring clothes-pins will answer). Expose to a bright, glaring sunshine, with the rays falling as nearly in a perpendicular as possible. It will soon begin to turn brown, and, in a few hours, a perfect and dark impression will be obtained; when it may be removed from the frame and placed in clear water, which must be changed every few minutes, till the yellow part becomes perfectly white. Sometimes the figures will be perfect, every vein and mark distinct; and these photographs are most interesting and beautiful when collected into a book.

PRESERVING WHITE FLOWERS.

No doubt many of our readers have looked with admiration and wonder upon the chaplet or cross of pure white flowers, preserved as mementos of "friends departed," or as treasured relics of the day when some fair bride stood under the snowy "marriage bell" and carried the lovely bouquet of orange blossoms, camellias, etc., which, within their glass cases, appear as perfect now as in the hour they were gathered.

For many years the art by which these white flowers were preserved was kept a great secret, and only those belonging to the "mystic circle" of the initiated understood the operation; and these reaped rich harvests from those wealthy persons who were willing to pay fabulous prices for the flowers that had rested on the breast of some loved, but departed friend, or graced the wedding of another loved one; but, by one of those accidents which, always in time, expose to light the long-entombed secrets of the wise ones, this interesting process has at last been made public; and we learn that the following process will enable any one to preserve the white and green flowers used upon special occasions, or, perhaps, desired for their beauty of form or other attribute.

Let the flowers be freshly plucked, and of those kinds which have firm texture, of pure white, or at least very delicate tints. If the collection is to be preserved without separating the parts, the green leaves must be removed, as they require a different treatment. This done, take fine paraffine, that is, of the very best quality, which melt in a clean, new tin vessel placed in a pan of boiling water, which must be kept constantly hot around it, so as to keep the paraffine in a liquid state. Into this thin and transparent liquid mass, dip the blossoms; or, if found more convenient, brush each one quickly with a soft camel's-hair of small size, so as to give them a smooth, thin coat that will cover every part of each

petal; and this will form a casing about them that will entirely exclude the air, and prevent their withering. The perfect transparency of the material renders this coating entirely invisible, so that the flowers present that natural appearance which constitutes the peculiar charm of this work.

Green leaves must be coated with green wax, or with paraffine colored with green paint, in powder, tied in a thin, Swiss-muslin bag, and melted in it. Chrome green is best, lightened to proper shade by the addition of chrome yellow; or, if a blue-green leaf is desired, permanent blue added in very small quantity.

We have experimented in this, during the season, by coloring the paraffine with other colors, such as pink, lavender, etc., and have been quite successful with a certain class of flowers. Those fond of experimenting will find this a most interesting field in which to indulge their taste, as the flowers thus preserved are as perfectly natural as if freshly gathered.

Great care is necessary in having the paraffine perfectly liquefied, yet not so hot that it will "cook" the blossoms; for in this case, they will turn brown and "sluff off;" that is, become soft and apparently decayed.

PRESERVING NATURAL FLOWERS OF THE SOFT-PETALED VARIETIES.

Having described the method of preserving flowers by drying them in sand, we will now give still another process, which has been kept a matter of great secrecy, and, of course, excited a vast amount of curiosity in Europe for some years; but which the public periodicals in France and England have been making public for a year or two past. The first flowers we saw preserved in this way was a wreath, in a deep recess frame, exhibited in the window of an art emporium in Chicago, in the year 1871, and we imagined, at the first glance, that they were wax; but, upon examination, found they were natural flowers,—the tints rather lighter than in the fresh state; still, quite perfect in form, and exceedingly delicate and lovely in appearance. Upon inquiry, we were informed that they were imported, and were dried by the fumes of sulphur, though in what manner was not known. From that time we felt greatly interested concerning the process, but had no opportunity of discovering anything more concerning the matter until some time after, when a scientific gentleman explained the process to us; and soon after, we read the same in different journals, and began to make an attempt to preserve a few simple flowers, as an experiment, since which, as we succeeded well, we have continued, increasing our collection; finding the process not only simple, but exceedingly interesting, we assure our readers they can also do, if they will attempt it.

The only articles necessary for this operation are a close box, a pan for the sulphur, and some stick sulphur. Any tight wooden or tin box will answer, with

a little preparation, made as follows :—Supposing there are flowers sufficient to fill a half-peck basket ; a wooden box, about two feet square is taken (we find one of the square tea-boxes convenient, as being light and easily handled, and also, because closely papered), and upon the inside, two strips screwed or nailed on opposite sides, upon which the rods holding the flowers are rested. As the box is air-tight, the ignited sulphur would speedily consume the small portion of air contained in the box, and be immediately smothered ; it is necessary, therefore, to have a hole or two bored, or a little door with hinge made in one end of the box, which may be opened or closed at pleasure, the former having plugs or corks fitting them tightly.

Our course is this :—Having selected a number of Roses and buds, Fuschias, Dahlias, Larkspurs, Orange Flowers, Camellias, Pansies, etc., we tie them in loose clusters of from two to six or eight, according to size, and hang them upon

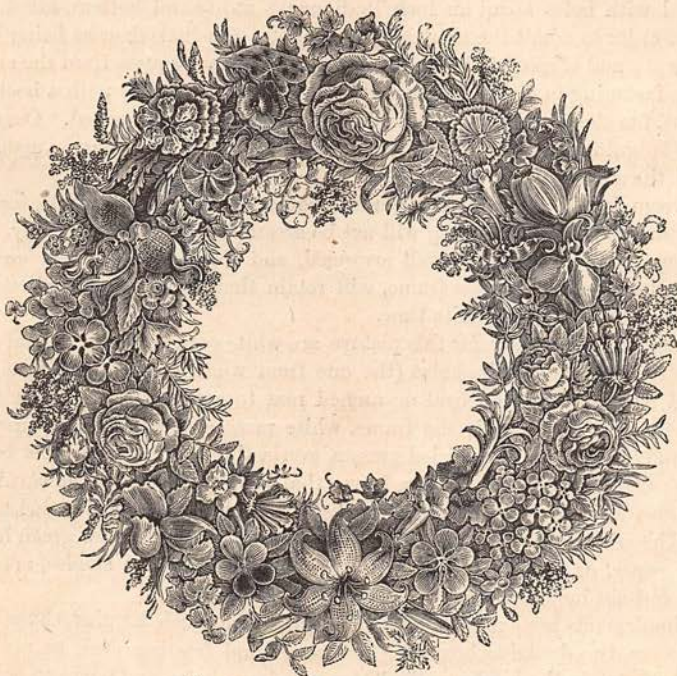


Fig. 22. Wreath of Preserved Thorns.

rods, which fit across the box upon the ledges, placing about four rows of them. In an iron pan are some live embers of charcoal, which is set upon the bottom of the box ; an ounce or two of crushed sulphur is sprinkled quickly over, and the lid, which, in our case, slides, pushed into place. The little panel or door,

which is on the lower part of one side and has a hinge, is held open for a few minutes until, glancing in, we perceive all is progressing favorably and the fumes are rising from the ignited sulphur, when we close and hook the door, which fits tightly. Throw a heavy blanket over the box, tucking it round closely, and leave it until the following day, or about twenty-four hours, when they will, if all has gone well, be found bleached to a dull white color. This, upon exposing them to the air, in a dry atmosphere, they gradually lose, and assume their own colors, though not of such intense vivid shades, perhaps, as before bleaching, but permanent.

It is of the utmost importance, in this operation, that the box be made perfectly tight and close by pasting muslin or paper over each corner; and if the lid closes down upon the top, to paste a strip around it also, as it can be easily cut open along the crack when the box is to be opened. Some bleaching-boxes are fitted with holes about an inch in diameter at top and bottom, fitted with corks, in order to admit the air; though we prefer the little door as being more convenient; and it consists in simply sawing out an inch square from the side of the box, fastening in on the upper part with a hinge and below with a hook; it, of course, fits closely into the exact place from which it was sawed. Once the sulphur is ignited, and the box should be kept as close as possible; as upon this depends the success of the operation, in a great measure.

The room in which the box is placed should be as dry as possible, for in a damp atmosphere, the bleaching will not be accomplished so satisfactorily.

Flowers, thus preserved, if well arranged, and sealed hermetically under a glass shade or behind a recess frame, will retain their beauty and perfection of form and color for an indefinite time.

The materials necessary for this picture are white card-board, to fit and cover a recess frame of any desired size (the one from which this is taken is one by one and one-half feet), an oval or arched mat to surround the picture, a flat wooden cross of size to suit the frame, white moss, such as is found upon old fences and trees, green moss, dried grasses, everlasting flowers, the scarlet berries or balls called Crabs Eyes, autumn leaves that have been pressed and varnished, dried ferns, white frosting, mucilage of best white gum-arabic, white glue, arrow-root. The white stamens used for wax or paper flowers, and a few green leaves, wax or paper, or dried natural ones, a few crayons of green shades, are serviceable, but not indispensable.

The implements are a mucilage brush, a small sash-brush for glue, sharp knife and scissors, two dredging boxes for arrow-root and frosting, such as are used for pepper, etc., in the kitchen—the latter with large holes, and boxes to hold the various materials, in order to keep them from getting broken and mingled together, which causes much trouble and discomfort.

Having all these articles ready and the cross made, wet it well with rather stiff glue, and place it upon the white card-board, back of the recess, the middle rather

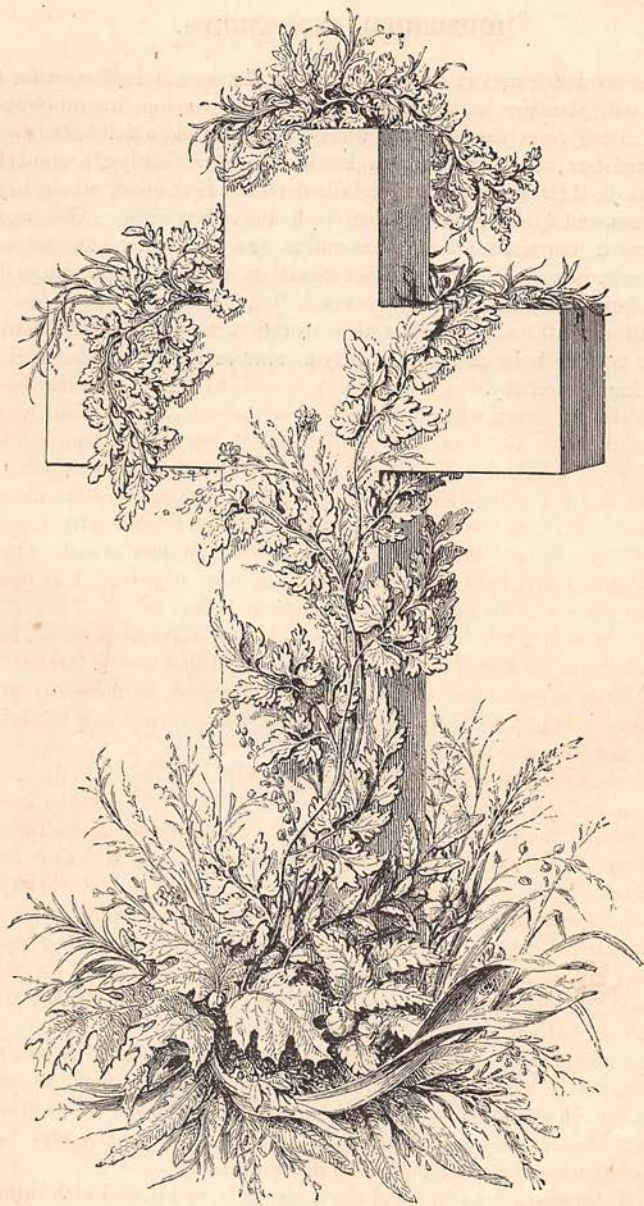


Fig. 23. Easter Cross.

above the center of frame, in order to allow for the ground-work, as seen in the design. Cover the cross with white moss and bark, commencing at the top and covering carefully, one piece slightly overlapping the other, until entirely covered. Take a card box, about half as deep as the recess, cut away the one side and make a hole in the bottom that will admit the bottom of cross, glue it to the recess and cross, and when dry, cover with green moss. Place grasses, flowers, leaves, etc., in tasteful groups around and on it, and train a piece of vine-like fern or vine around the body and over the arms of the cross, with drooping sprays falling carelessly from the arms. When dry, touch lightly with mucilage, dust a little powder and a great deal of frosting upon it and it is done. After the frosting, etc., dries, tap the back of frame lightly to remove loose particles of frosting, etc., then frame carefully.