

CHAPTER V.
PICTURE-FRAMES.

A PICTURE of great merit may have its beauty enhanced or curtailed by being enclosed in an unsuitable frame. Thus an oil-painting, chromo, or colored engraving looks best with gilding about it, and the brighter and more ornamental the frame, so far as consistent with the surroundings, the better; on the other hand, a crayon, or mono-chromatic, or an engraving, looks well in a walnut, or walnut and gilded frame; while rustic pictures require a more rural style.

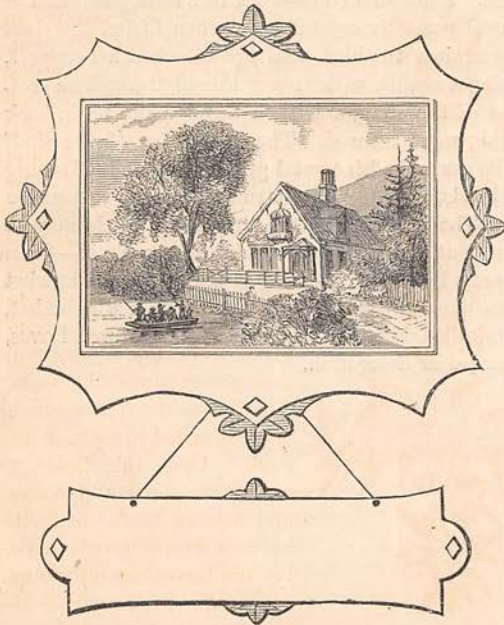


Fig. 1. Card-Board Frame for Picture and Mats.

Again, frames should correspond with the subject which they surround (that is the "home-made" class); for instance, a sea-view, have a coral or shell frame; a skating scene, a frosted one, etc. Therefore, in describing various kinds of pictures, we have mentioned the sort of frames most suitable for them.

Many persons condemn the growing taste for home-made adornments, branding them with the epithets of "common," "clumsy," "untasteful," — and even "vulgar;" but such persons must be of that unfortunate class who, having seen mere rude specimens of careless, ill-shapen workmanship, and emanations of minds void of

that rare delicacy which creates only "a thing of beauty," let its component parts be composed of what they may. We will endeavor to show that by proper and tasteful use of even rude materials, artistic frames may be formed. In making rustic frames, certain general principles must be understood, and some particular rules followed: Thus, never mass together an indiscriminate collection of incongruous materials, nor consider it imperative to crowd upon one piece all the various ornaments at hand, simply because you possess them. Attention to these two important points will enhance the beauty and delicacy of a picture to a wonderful degree.

The rules to be observed are: Before commencing, have all the materials ready, and the implements in good order. Let the foundation be made firm, and if there are corners, have them securely joined, fastening with glue. The different strips may be carved or cut, if desired, and made very ornamental. When finished, oil, or varnish with Copal. This is an unusually beautiful frame, and appropriate for rustic cross, the picture of "Faith," or the numerous crosses in chromos or paintings; or for sacred pictures, such as "Ecce Homo," "The Good Shepherd," "The Light of the World," etc., they are especially suited.

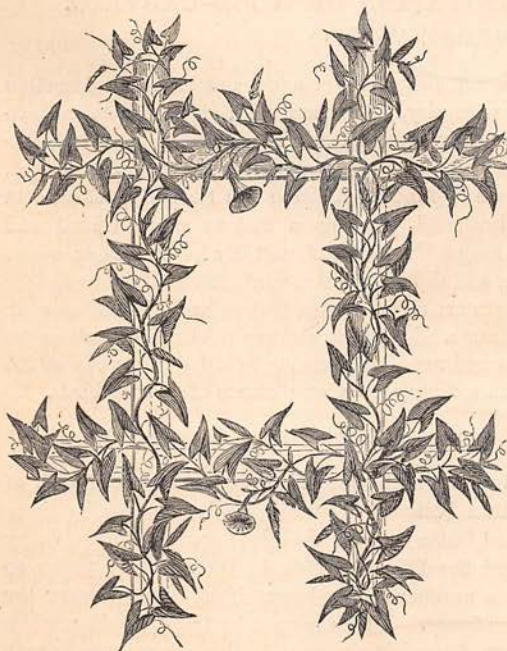


Fig. 2.

Fig 2 is made by carving out the foundation-frame in imitation of a trellis; cutting two long, slender pieces for each side, and the same for top and bottom, crossing the corners, which bind with strips or shavings of the walnut, crossed over, as if tied; allowing a space between each two of the long strips, upon which fasten short strips across horizontally, from top to bottom, and across upon the ends. This forms the trellis, which may be varied in style, if desired. Upon this fasten a vine, with clusters of leaves and flowers, berries or fruit, as may be preferred; carving the leaves carefully from one-eighth inch wood, cutting the veins and markings with the point of a sharp

knife. The fruit, nuts or flowers, require heavier stuff. These frames are graceful and pretty, and appropriate for fruit and flower pieces, or any rural scene.

RUSTIC FRAMES.

There is no class of ornamental work which requires so much neatness and care as that of rustic work, inasmuch from the abundance of material and readiness of accumulating the treasure, the tendency is to overcrowd. In fancy work, as in dress, overabundance of ornamentation not only spoils the fine effect, but hides the more delicate parts and looks clumsy and overdone. As a general rule, dark colors are the most elegant; black, the various shades of brown, and if light hues are admirable, they should be the light shades of sienna; or Bismarck and buff, and these sometimes afford pretty contrasts. When the bark is retained, and is mossy, no varnish should be used; in using materials such as nuts, seeds, etc., confine yourself to only one or two varieties, as a mixture mars the effect.

NUT-FRAME IN IMITATION OF WOOD-CARVING. (ROSE-WOOD.)

Make a foundation of pine wood, either oval or square, stain with a decoction of Venetian red and vinegar; when dry, rub smooth with emery-paper, and varnish with Japan varnish. Cut leaves from thick sheepskin, of kind to correspond with the nuts to be used; of which none can surpass the English walnut, Brazil, or pecan nut, Buckeye and filbert. Moisten the leather in clear, cold water, and mold on the leaf-mold, used as a cutter; when veined and shaped, paint with the decoction of Venetian red, and dry in the sun or oven; pass the nuts through the dye, and dip both leaves and nuts in Japan varnish; when dry, arrange in tasteful groups upon the top, bottom and sides of an oval, or on the corners of a square frame. Make the clusters thick, and broad in the center, using the largest leaves and nuts, and running to a delicate spray at the ends. This frame looks well in a dining-room, on pictures of fruit or birds.

VINE-FRAME.

Take four pieces of grape-vine, of length that will pass around an oval dish of suitable size, and coil them in a boiler of hot water, boiling or soaking them until pliable, when remove, and fasten around the dish; securing the ends by tying, and twining wire around the different strips, in three or four places, to hold in proper position. Cut a number of vine-leaves from leather, using the cutters or molds, sold for wax-flowers. Make grapes by tying small marbles in chamois-skin, or old kid glove, fastening a piece of leather-colored vine in each one. Paint these, the leaves and frame of light brown. Place a large, full clus-

ter at the top, and make a vine to twine in and out, among the bars of the foundation, arranging the leaves and fruit in tasteful groups. When done, varnish with Copal.

The grape-vine picture-frame here illustrated in Fig. 3, is constructed as follows: Cut off four pieces of wild grape-vine, or cultivated, if you can get it, each three, four, or five feet long, according to the desired size of the frame.

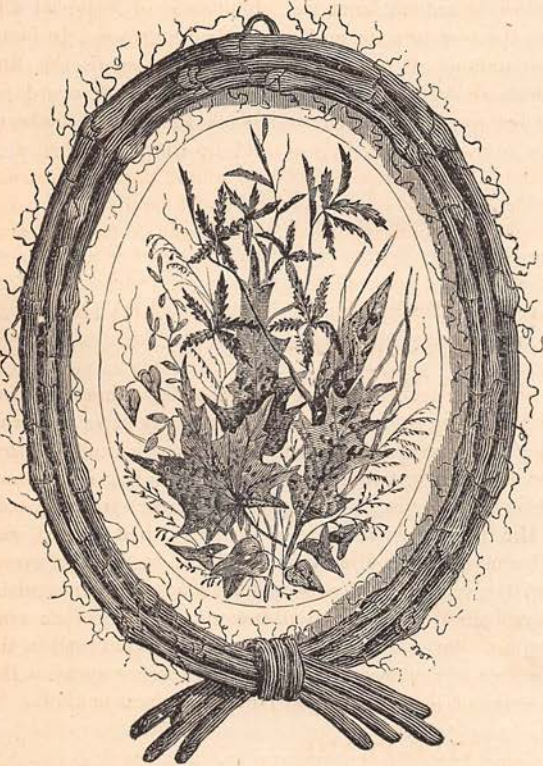


Fig. 3. Grape-Vine Picture-Frame.

They can be cut in the Winter or Spring better than at any other time, as the absence of leaves will allow you to find what you want. Strip the loose bark from the vines, but leave on as many little twigs and tendrils as possible. Then coil the four lengths in a vessel of hot water, and leave them until they are perfectly pliable. They must then be placed together and arranged around an oval mold. A soup-tureen, or a large vegetable dish, turned upside-down, will make a capital mold, for the frame will slip off easily when it is dry. The vines must be tied together at the bottom with a piece of vine and all the tendrils and twigs arranged as artistically as possible on the outside of the frame. Those which will project on the inside must be clipped off. Weights should then be placed on it, to keep it down upon the mold, and it should be left to dry. When all parts of it are stiff and hard, it may be taken from the mold, and a walnut "mat," or a piece of Bristol-board or fancy pasteboard, with a suitable oval opening, must be fixed to the back by small tacks. Then, a piece of glass, which may be rectangular, if it is a little longer and wider than the oval opening in the pasteboard, must

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be fastened behind that, and with a thin piece of board or a thick piece of pasteboard for a back. Varnishing will generally improve its appearance.

SHELL-FRAME.

Make a pine foundation, which cover with the composition of beeswax, rosin and tallow, described in Shell-Work; place large shells at the corners, grouping them in clusters, diminishing towards the center of sides and ends. Put only a small portion of the cement on at a time, and press the shells upon it while warm; fill in with tiny rice and pearl shells, and arrange a few sprays of coral among them, made by dipping raisin-stems in scarlet sealing-wax, dissolved in boiling alcohol. Varnish, or not, as preferred. Demar varnish is the proper kind, if used. This frame looks well on sea-views, or in a dining-room, on pictures of fish, etc.

CORAL-FRAME.

Make the foundation for this frame by sewing strips of covered wire or hoop-skirt springs together, either in square or oval form, holding the pieces apart by small strips between. Cover the entire skeleton with strands of coarse crochecotton, about two inches long, sewed quite closely together. Make a mixture of two parts white cake-wax, one part rosin, and sufficient lamp-black, vermilion, carmine, or flake-white to give the desired tint of black, scarlet, cherry color or white. If preferred, the proper size and consistence may be given to the tags of cotton by dipping them into a paste made of flour and glue boiled until of the consistency of thick starch; then, after twisting into shape, varnishing with red sealing-wax, flake-white, drop-black, or carmine in spirits of wine, giving several coats to the stiff sprays. Having the preparation of wax, etc., melted in a baking-pan, a portion of the frame must be dipped; and when a little cool dipped again, a second and third time; and finally twisted and bent into fantastic shapes, like stiff coral sprays, going over the entire frame until the whole is made of proper shape and proportion. Sufficient wax must be melted to dip the article into, though towards the last of the operation it will be necessary to hold the frame, with the strands downward, and pour the wax over with a spoon. Black coral, made in this way, is beautiful, and the crimson and light cherry shades are scarcely to be distinguished from the natural sprays. Frames thus formed are also suitable for the same class of pictures as those made with shells.

STRAW PICTURE-FRAME.

Pick out from a bundle of straws those without flaws. It takes five for each part of the frame. Arrange them thus: Put one long straw in the center, a shorter one on each side, and a shorter again on each side of these; sew them together at the back with some strong cotton. When you have the top, bottom, and sides ready, fasten them together at the corners in the form of an Oxford

frame, placing the top and bottom ones in front of the sides. Then make four small pieces of three straws in each, the center one the longest, and fasten them crosswise to each corner by means of a piece of ribbon tied round; the

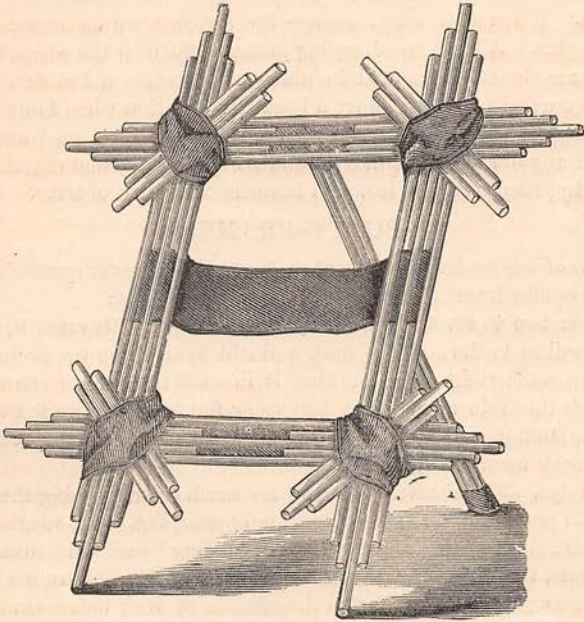


Fig. 4. Fancy Straw-Frame.

ribbon is to hide where the parts of the frame are joined together. The picture is fastened in with narrow ribbon, crossed over at the back, and brought through between the straws on each side of the frame, then passed over the center straw through to the back, and firmly sewn; this ribbon has a very pretty effect. The frame is supported by three straws, which should be sewn to the back of the top; the straws should be bound at the bottom with ribbon to keep them firmly together. If the frame is to be hung up, a loop of ribbon should be sewn upon the top.

TO RENOVATE OLD PICTURE-FRAMES.

An old frame may be "rejuvenated" in several ways, and frequently present a better appearance than the newer and more expensive ones surrounding it. Take such an old frame and cover with white candle-wick wound closely round it; then dissolve a quantity of alum in boiling water, making a saturated solution, and making sufficient to cover the front of the frame entirely, when it is

immersed in it. Immerse the frame in this, and allow it to remain in it until the wick has absorbed all the alum-water it will take up; when remove and dry, and it will be found beautifully crystallized. Procure a quantity of raisinstems, bits of rough bark, small twigs, etc., which also place in the alum until crystallized. When all are dry, arrange the sprays upon the frame and fasten with white glue. Allow some drooping pieces to fall over the edges, like icicles; and dry some threads, saturated in alum-water, before a hot fire, which will appear like crusted snow, and prove a beautiful addition when hung among the icicles and sprays of icy moss and branches. This frame, placed around a winter scene, of any description, will be found an appropriate and elegant surrounding, appearing like snow and ice upon branches and bark of trees.

PUTTY-FRAMES.

Lest some of our readers should not understand the *modus operandi* of making these now popular frames, we will give the full directions:

Take from two to seven pounds of putty, made perfectly smooth, using more or less, according to the size of frame, and add Spanish brown or burnt umber as will impart the right color, working it in until no specks or streaks can be seen. Work this into appropriate designs or figures with the fingers, and lay them on the frame; grapes, leaves and scrolls are used more than other figures, with bead-work upon the edges.

Logwood dye, with saleratus added, forms a rich color, washing the work with it in order to prevent them from separating by warping. Use varnish, carefully making it sufficiently thin to "flow" and not "drag" under the brush; for flat, broad surfaces, the common flat varnish brush is best, but the round one will be required for rough surfaces. Fasten the glass in securely before commencing to put the ornaments on the foundation. For securing various ornaments on cardboard, glue is the best article, but as it will not adhere to wood or metal, it is necessary when the foundation is made of these, to cover first with cement. When large ornaments are fastened on with brad-nails, small holes should be pierced through the ornament, and partially through the frame, to prevent their splitting. For leather leaves and flowers the sharp-pointed upholsterers' tacks, with round heads, are very appropriate. Various materials are used as ground-work where the ornaments do not cover the foundation; for this purpose, rice, sago, sand, small seed-shells, black pepper, powder, and coal crushed fine, will be found suitable. For delicate work, white glue is best, but the dark-colored will answer for any ordinary work; whichever kind is used, however, use care in not applying it too thickly, and keep it constantly hot. When a large "piece" is to be accomplished, it will be found very satisfactory to use a regular "glue-pot," hung in a vessel of hot water. Always have a brush in each pot, or perhaps two, a large and small sized one; the kind used by house-painters for window-sash are best.

CAT-TAIL PICTURE-FRAMES.

A very pretty frame for an engraving may be made of the long, tough stem of the common cat-tail, to be found growing in profusion by streams and in marshy places. The cat-tails, after being dried, should be arranged as seen in our illustration. The joinings at the corners may be ornamented with small pine cones, or simply bound with grape-vine bark. The vine-work shown in the illustration is made of leather-work, directions for which are given in other pages. The leather and cones are of a uniform color when varnished. The frame of the picture may either be left open so as to show the wall behind it, or it may be formed upon a thin board with a border of maroon or crimson velvet showing through. In using a board-back, the picture, which should be smaller

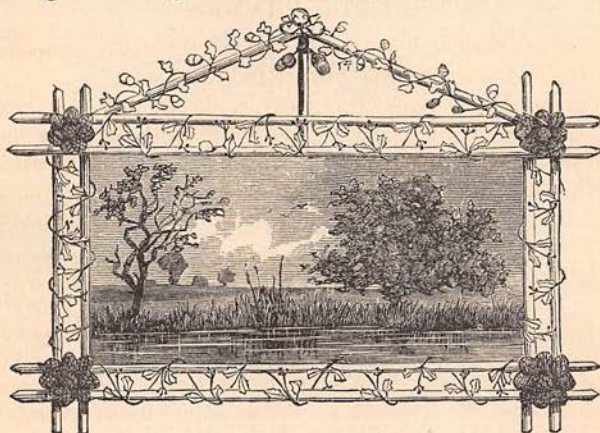


Fig. 5. Cat-Tail and Leather Frame.

than the board should be first laid upon it; over that a paper spandrel, to be purchased at any photograph gallery; and over that the glass. The whole may then be secured in place by means of thin strips of wood so placed and fastened that they shall form the frame. Velvet or velveteen should be glued over this border, neatly covering the edge and folding at least half an inch over the back; and the cat-tails may be arranged over this, allowing them to project at the corners, as seen in the engraving.

GILT FRAME.

Make or obtain from a manufactory an oval or square frame. Having a quantity of plain and fancy gilt paper, cut the pieces of suitable sizes to cover the frame. Should the frame be large and the sheets of paper comparatively small, use great care in joining the pieces; and in case of their showing, endeavor to cover them with the ornaments. These may be made of various styles

and materials, neatly covered with the gilt paper or with gold-foil, liquid gold paint, or in shells. A very handsome frame is made as follows (the one used as the model was a square, 18 x 24 inches and four inches wide): A flat edge runs around the outside; upon this a preparation of two parts white wax, one of glue, and a little rosin is spread; on which is arranged a beading of large, brown coffee grains, placed closely together, and when dry, varnished with Copal. Next to this beading, fasten a grooved molding, such as is used for window or door facings, which cover with plain gilt paper, as also the two and a half inches of flat surface still remaining within, but ornament it thus: leaving a narrow line next the strip of molding, fasten on with size a strip of richly-enameled gold paper, about half an inch wide; then a double row of brown, varnished coffee grains; then a strip of figured gilt paper; then another narrow strip of molding covered with plain gilt paper; finishing with a double beading of the coffee grains, arranged as before, and a narrow margin of gilt. The sheets of gilt paper being much smaller than the frame, it will require two or three of them to cover it; when, if the connections show, arrange the paper in such a manner that all the connections commence in one place, which hide by making walnut and gilt ornaments, and arranging to fall gracefully over them, thus: cover wire with the gilt paper, to which fasten vine-leaves of three or four sizes, cut out of sheep-skin, and either covered with the paper or painted with gold-size; and when so dry that it will stick to the finger, lay on the gold-leaf or gold-bronze, pressing it gently and carefully with a soft cloth. Make a bunch of grapes by tying small marbles in chamois-skin; then varnish with Japanese varnish. Make clusters to correspond for each corner; varnish with clear, thin, "finishing varnish." Such frames are exceedingly handsome, and suitable for paintings, chromos or fine engravings, or for mono-chromatic or pastile pieces.

RUSTIC FRAME IN IMITATION OF RICH WALNUT.

The foundation for this frame may be of pine wood, and should be covered with a coating of some one of the materials mentioned as "adherents," also stain it with umber scalded in vinegar, and rub gently with flannel. Prepare a number of leather leaves, by obtaining leaf-molds of hickory-nut, oak and chestnut, and cutting from sheep-skin which has been made damp; stain with a decoction of burnt umber, and after shaping and veining upon the molds, dry in the oven; then dip in Japan varnish. Obtain a quantity of English walnuts, pecans and acorns, or chestnuts, hickory-nuts, etc., which also dip in the varnish; make a pretty beading around the edge of the frame with the halves of filberts and cherry-stones, arranged in rows, and varnished. Cluster the nuts and their respective leaves in graceful groups, not crowding, and yet sufficiently close to appear rich and heavy. The leaves may be fastened to stems of wire covered with soft leather, and arranged on natural branches that have been stripped of bark and varnished. The acorns should have the nut formed of

putty, colored with umber, and glued into the cups. In order to make the frame look rounded and full, putty, or the composition of wax, etc., may be built upon the center and rounded off towards the edges; then, when dry, covered with the adherent (black pepper or coal-dust) sprinkled on glue. The clusters arranged upon such a foundation will appear full in the center, instead of flat. This style of frame is suitable for rustic pictures, crayons, lithographs, etc.; a gilt molding should always be placed around the inner edge of all frames, and may be easily made by covering a strip of card or thin board with plain gilt paper.

PICTURE-FRAME IN LEATHER-WORK.

Picture-frame with decoration of ivy leaves, Fig. 6. Materials: a piece of



Fig. 6.

thin, tanned sheep-skin, very fine flower-wire, a frame of thin slats of wood four-fifths of an inch wide, pincers, thick gum, Copal varnish, batting.

This frame imitates a tree-trunk grown over with ivy. A thin, wood frame seven and one-fifth inches high, and six and two-fifths inches wide constitutes the foundation; the frame is covered with a layer of batting, pasted on. To fit this frame, cut another of leather, taking care to add as much as the slight rounding given by the batting requires, and a little to lap over to the back of the frame. To give the leather the appearance of bark, moisten it and run along it, lengthwise, with the pincers; the rounding of the stems is likewise effected by smartly running the pincers along the middle of the moist leather. Four branches, whose stems are quite pliant, are fastened each to a corner of the frame. Eight smaller branches, cut exactly like the large ones, with the exception of the two biggest leaves, complete the decoration. The ivy branches are tacked to the frame by means of exceedingly fine wire-stems attached to the middle of each leaf, and passed through small holes bored for that purpose into the leather-frame; these give the leaves a raised appearance. The small crosses in the ivy-leaves, designate the spots where the wire-stems are to be attached. When the branches have been gracefully fastened in the manner above described, paste the leather-frame to the wood covered with batting. The number of coats of Copal varnish must be decided according to the lighter or darker color desired that the frame should attain.

SQUARE CARVED WALNUT FRAMES, 14 x 18 INCHES.

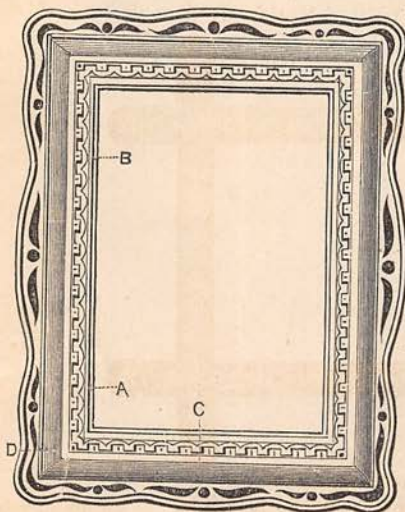


Fig. 7.

These may be formed in various styles, and can be made very elegant by skillfully using the saws, made especially for such purposes. A good style of carved frame is made by sawing an ornamental strip half an inch deep, to pass around beyond the gilt margin A. An open pattern, marked out upon it, is sawed out upon the edge, and cut out in mosaic figures through the center B (a strip of gold paper laid under this gives a beautiful appearance); upon this a thick, narrow strip is placed, cut with two beveled edges, forming a ridge; beyond this a strip one-fourth inch thick, and two inches deep, is placed with the edge out, which shows the margin back, in a recess, as it were; these

strips must be cut out in ornamental pattern through the center, and upon the edge a beaded strip should be fastened, while across the corners, clusters of leaves and scrolls are placed, carved of walnut. The edge without is finished with strips of carved bead-work, and the whole oiled or varnished.

POP-CORN PICTURE-FRAME.

Have a little frame made of thin wood, the shape of the pattern, or if not that, take strong pasteboard; then with white glue, fasten a border of cherry-stones on the outer and inner edge. In each of the eight corners put an apricot-stone or a hazel-nut, and then place plum-stones as shown in the picture; lastly, fill the spaces that are left with red popcorn. It might be better to varnish the stones and nuts before putting on the corn.

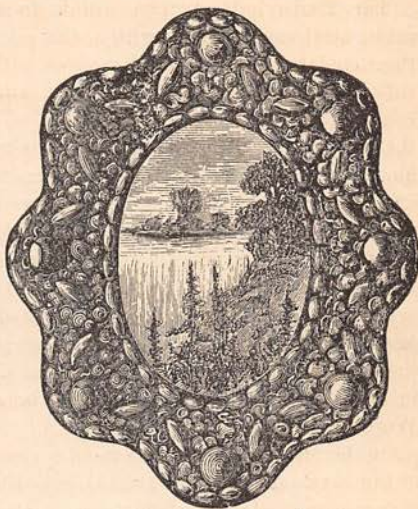


Fig. 8. Pop-Corn Picture-frame.

FRAME OF BEANS AND CORN.

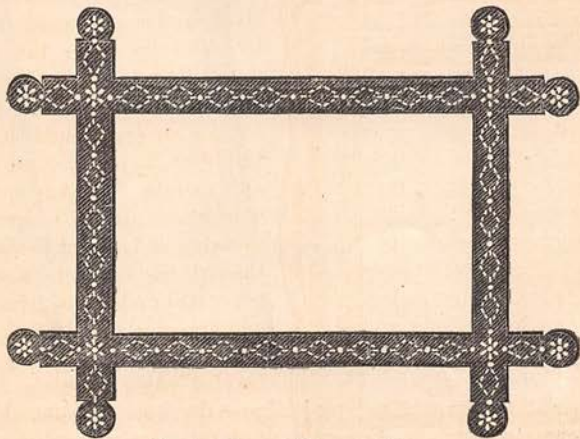


Fig. 9. Frame of Beans and Corn.

Make your frame of good, smooth pine wood, of any size to suit the picture to be framed; paint it a good black. Select good, clear, even-sized kernels of corn

for the rosettes, making the center of a small acorn. Ornament the frame with white beans split in two, in the form of diamonds, with an acorn between each diamond. Any other pattern will do, to suit the taste of the maker. Paint the whole black and then varnish. This is easily made, and makes a very neat frame.

CARVED FRAMES.

Another carved frame is made of four long, square pieces, cut in grooves with the penknife, each of the eight ends made to taper gradually from the center. These carved sides may be made exceedingly handsome, by having used the knife skillfully, and cutting innumerable small grooves lengthwise, then filling in with fine work called "picking out," done with the point of the knife. Cut a pair of large leaves and a flower, for the center of the top and bottom, and notch out sockets for the admission of the side-pieces upon the four ends, about an inch and a half or two inches from the end; making them to cross each other, and project at the corners. At the point of intersection, place an ornament cut from the wood, a star, or round flower, or a button; make the margin as usual.

Another pretty mode is to ornament upon the corners instead of the centers; a group of carved leaves and natural nuts varnished, or a combination of leather leaves, acorns, and a gnarled branch on the corners or at the top and bottom, or three carved leaves on each corner, are all pretty modes of adorning. An unusually tasteful frame is made in the Gothic style; making a margin of gilt and walnut, then cutting six pieces for the sides, four twenty-two inches and two twenty-four inches long; the top and bottom, four twenty inches, two twenty-two inches long, and all of them one-half inch wide (of *one-fourth inch* wood), morticed together at the corners, and projecting,—the short ones outside one inch, the center ones two inches. Cut or saw, also, twelve pieces three inches in length, pointing the ends, both of these and the main pieces; also, six pieces—the first pair four inches long, the second six, the third eight; cut, also, six

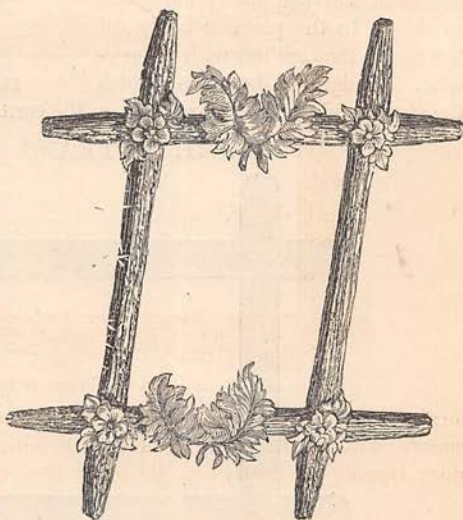


Fig. 10.

small strips two inches long; the twelve pieces are to be crossed one over another in six pairs, three on each side; the six pieces in graduated pairs, must be arranged upon the top; the small ones crossed at the top, and placed low down upon the top rails of the frame; the second in front, arranged in the same way; the third in front, crossed over above the other two pairs; carve an ornamental cross and place upon the apex of the arch; arrange the three small pieces along the bottom in three crosses. Fasten all pieces together with little black buttons, making holes for the eyes.

FRAME OF CONES.

Cut the frame from bookbinders' pasteboard. Select good, clear, hard pine cones. Dissect those which have large, fair scales, and sew a double row of the scales round the inside and outside of the frame. Make rosettes as in the pattern of the scales of soft pine cones, with a small acorn for center; the leaves at the

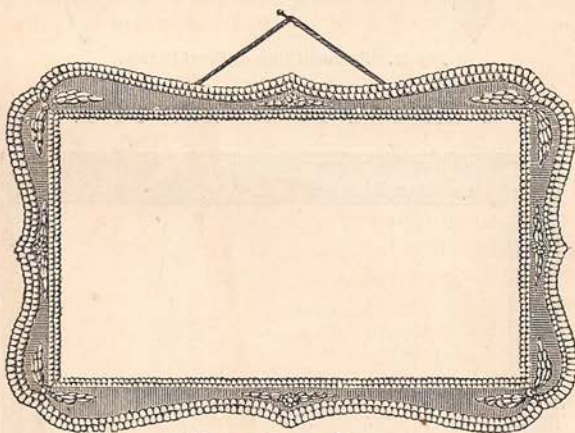


Fig. 11. Frame of Cones.

corner of frame to be made of soft pine scales, with a small cone or acorn for center. Fill up the entire ground-work with hard pine scales, fastened with glue; lapping one neatly over the other, then varnish.

FRAME OF RICE OR PEARL BARLEY.

Make your frame as in Fig. 9. Melt sealing-wax of the desired color (red is to be preferred as it resembles coral) in first-proof alcohol. Spread thickly over frame. Stir rice, sago, and small bits of tapioca into the vessel of dissolved sealing-wax; spread the same over the frame; dry thoroughly. Pearl barley can be

used the same way. If not entirely covered, touch with red paint. Card receivers or baskets are very handsome, made this way.

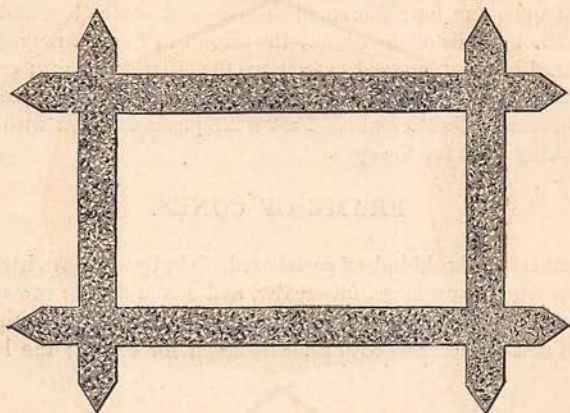


Fig. 12. Frame of Rice or Pearl Barley.

FRAME OF BEANS AND RICE.

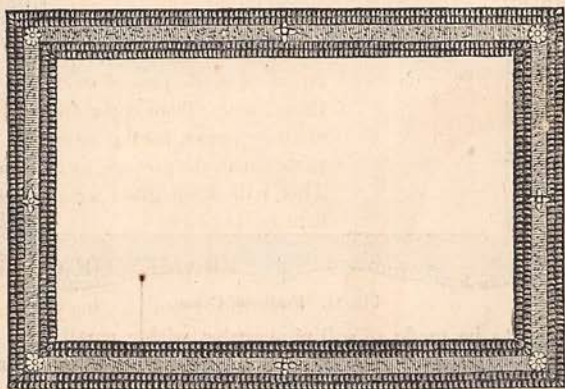


Fig. 13. Frame of Beans and Rice.

The frame to be made of wood, plain, and painted, as in Fig. 9. Rosettes in the corners, of beans; in the centers, of corn. Glue a double row of split beans on the inner and outer sides of the frame, or more rows if the size of the frame requires it. Cover the open space with hot glue, upon which sprinkle rice enough to cover it thoroughly. Paint the beans black and the rice red, or any other colors that the fancy may dictate. Varnish with pure white varnish.

FRAME OF CONES.

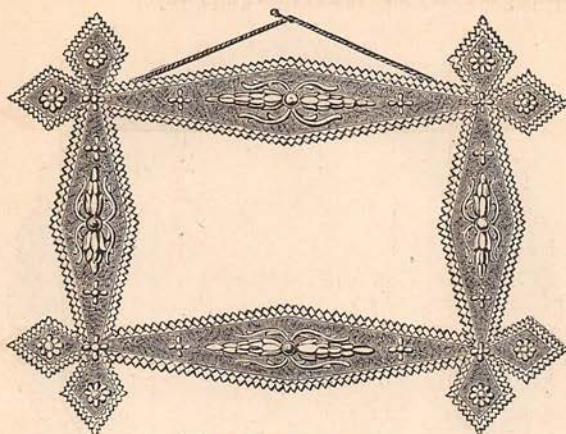


Fig. 14. Frame of Cones.

To be made as in Figs. 14 or 15, as regards the cones, rosettes and scales, but can be ornamented with small cones, acorns, seeds or anything pretty to suit the taste of the maker. We can not give the dimensions of any of these frames, as they will depend entirely upon the size of the picture to be framed.

The glass and picture should be secured by strips of cloth pasted over the edges to hold them firm. Then cover the entire back with cloth or paper, taking care that none of the paste touch the picture, so as to soak through. This will keep glass and picture perfectly firm in its place.



Fig. 15. Frame of Cones.

FRAMES OF CONES.

Cut the frame of heavy pasteboard (if this is not handy, pasteboard boxes, such as can be obtained at any store will do). The center of each scallop in these patterns to consist of soft pine scale rosettes, the centers to be acorns or hard pine cones, cut off at the base to make them the required size. Sew at least two rows on the outer and inner edge. This makes the frame stronger and more durable. Fill up the ground-work as stated in Fig. 11, and varnish.

Some place an even coating of putty all over the frame and insert the scales into it; but it is not as good as the sewing and glue.

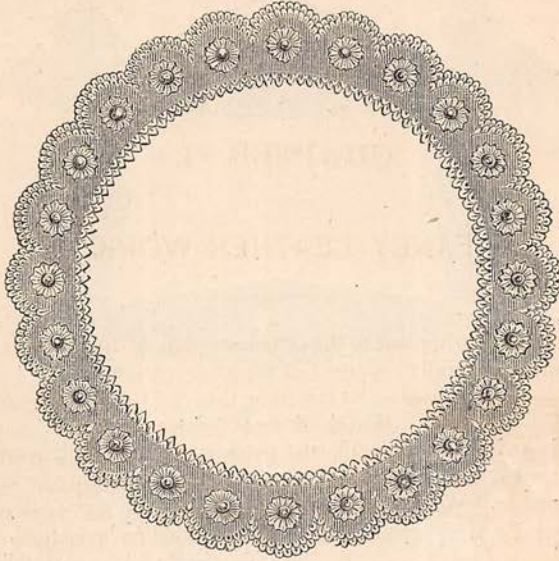


Fig. 16. Frame of Cones.