

## Practical Hints.

### DESIGN AND WORK IN CABINET FURNITURE.

By A. CABE.

The accompanying sketch is a design for a wardrobe, executed in American walnut. This suite is suitable for a bedroom of large dimensions, and consists of the wardrobe here shown, a six-posted bed, cheval glass with pedestals, washstand, night commode, three chairs, and a towel horse, together with window cornices to match.

The American walnut is generally straight in the grain, and with little or no figure. In the present design the whole is solid, no part being veneered, and all the cuttings and chamferings are ebonized.

The wardrobe consists of a base or plinth, 5 in. deep, on which rest four carcasses. The low carcass in the centre contains three drawers; it is 2 ft. 6 in. high, and 3 ft. 5 in. across the face; over it is a carcass, same depth and breadth. It has two broad pannelled haffits, and a door with a mirror in the centre. Inside this carcass are three shelves. The two wings are each 24 in. square and 5 ft. 6 in. high. They are used for hanging garments, and are fitted with brass hooks for that purpose. The three cornices are made separately, and fixed in their places with screws. The cornices consist of a  $\frac{3}{4}$  square fillet, a 2 in. frieze, then a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. cavetto, and over it an inverted ovolo, and over all a blocking course, 2 in. high, and cut as shown. The doors and outer gables are framed of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. wood. These frames are checked (not grooved) on their inner edges for the panels, the latter being fitted in after polishing, and fastened with beaded slips, 3-16 in. thick. The gables of the inner carcasses need not be walnut to the back, only about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in. on the front edges being necessary. In the lower carcass they are  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. thick, as also the shelves between the drawers. These latter, are, however, only 4 in. broad, with filets of the same thickness going to the back on which the drawers run. The gables of the upper centre carcass are of  $\frac{3}{4}$  wood. The two broad haffits on either side of the mirror are framed of  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. wood, with the panels let in from behind. The mirror frame, which acts as a door and is pivot-hinged, is of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. walnut. The carving on top and bottom rails of doors is executed before the doors are framed together. The base is constructed of solid black walnut  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. thick, and secret dovetailed at the corners, and the same with the cornices. It may also be done by making base and cornices of  $\frac{3}{4}$  pine, and clamping with  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. walnut, mitreing the corners. In this case a molding has to be made and planted on upper edge of base, to conceal the fir. The whole job is dull polished; and finished with mediæval brass mounting.

**GILDING FRETWORK, ETC.**—The first thing to be done is to whiten the work. To do this scrape some whitening very fine, place it in a pipkin with a lump of gilder's size, and water sufficient to make it of the consistency of thick cream, when heated over a fire; then, with a camel-hair pencil, paint it on the object several times, allowing each coat to dry before applying the next. When the several coatings have raised it to the thickness of 1-16 in. set it aside for twelve or more hours, to harden; when hardened smooth the surface with very fine sand-paper first, and finally with a piece of cork; when using the cork frequently dip it in water, and, when practicable, use it in a circular motion. Thus far successful, the next thing is to lay on the gold. To gild, then, dissolve some gilder's—not common size—in water, and heat, and with a full brush lay it on the surface of the object. Cut the gold leaf, on a pad of buff leather, with a clean cut of the knife (much easier said than done; perseverance, however, with the cost of a book or two of gold mutilated, and a large amount of patience exhausted, will overcome the difficulty), to the size required; take these up on a tip (a row of long hairs placed between two bits of cardboard)—the professional way to do this is to strike the hair of the tip against the gilder's own whiskers or hair—and gently lay them on the surface of the object, taking care that each succeeding piece slightly overlaps the preceding. When dry, a small piece of fine sponge, dipped in a weak solution of size water, should be gently passed over it, to give a uniform appearance. If the bright gold requires to be deadened, deep ormolu should be used in a similar way after sizing. The yellow used for the ungilt portions consists of gilder's yellow, dissolved in size water, and is put on with a brush.

**DISSOLVING GLUE.**—The amount of water necessary to dissolve the glue in practice is to put plenty of cold water on the glue and let it soak over night; in the morning pour the excess

of water all off, and it will be found that the glue is much swollen and softened, and requires nothing more than a moderate heat—a little below the boiling point of water—to become liquid. As the better qualities of glue absorb much more water than the inferior kinds, the quantity of water necessary to dissolve say one pound of glue, is quite variable, therefore no reliable measure can be given. It is the same with isinglass, which is nothing, but another kind of glue. Gum ragacanth takes still more water; this and the gum arabic are dissolved in as much water as will give to each the consistency of thick syrup. The same is done with the solution of shellac in alcohol; when all are mixed and white lead added, it has a tendency to become thicker, but this is corrected by the glycerine and alcohol, which are not absolutely necessary for the sticking qualities, but only serve to preserve the mixture, as without them it soon spoils by the deterioration to which glue is subject when kept in a liquid state in closed bottles. If you leave the bottle open, and let the glue freely evaporate, adding water when it becomes too thick, you can keep small quantities of glue and mucilage without alcohol, any length of time, but not in closed bottles.

**IMITATION OAK FLOORS.**—A simple and beautiful method of giving to floors an almost perfect appearance of oak or walnut has come into vogue in London, and is largely increasing in popularity. The method consist in putting one ounce Vandyke brown in oil, three ounces pearl ash, and two drachms dragon's blood into an earthenware pan or large pitcher; on this mixture is poured one quart boiling water, and the whole stirred with a piece of wood. The article may be used hot or cold. The boards are first smoothed with a plane and sand-papered, the cracks being filled with plaster of Paris, and then a stiff brush is dipped into the stain, and with this it is well rubbed in—the brush being rubbed lengthwise of the boards. Only a small piece is prepared at a time. By rubbing in one place more than another, an appearance of oak or walnut is more apparent. When quite dry, the boards are sized with glue size, made by boiling glue in water and brushing it in the boards hot, and on this becoming dry, the boards are papered smooth and varnished with brown hard varnish, or with oak varnish—the first-named kind wearing better, and drying quicker if previously thinned with a little French polish, a smooth brush to be employed in applying it to the boards.

**IMITATION IVORY.**—Harris' patented imitation ivory is made by dissolving 100 grammes of glue in one litre of water, 50 grammes of alum in 1 litre of water, and mixing 50 grammes of good bleached cellulose with 3-5 litre of water. The moulds are carefully oiled with a mixture of equal parts of goose-grease and lard; then a mixture is formed, in an earthen vessel, of 75 grammes of the glue solution, 200 grammes of the cellulose water, 200 grammes of water, 250 grammes of finely-sifted gypsum, and 200 grammes of the alum solution. The mass is placed in moulds by a spoon, shaken so as to remove bubbles, and left to set and thicken. It is then removed from the molds, covered with a woolen cloth, the superfluous water pressed out, and after it has completely stiffened the fat is removed by hot water. It is then dried and soaked in a hot mixture of equal parts of wax and stearine. After cooling, it is brushed until the ivory lustre shows itself.

**BLACK ENAMEL.**—If wood is immersed in sulphuric acid it is dyed a jet black, and when dry can be polished by rubbing with a bone spatula; but what would suit best, I think, is the following:—Grind up very finely some drop black in water, put the paste in a cup and mix it with a little size or very thin glue, brush the wood over with this, let it dry, sandpaper it and give it another coat, allowing that to dry well, and again apply some worn emery or sandpaper. If well covered you may now French polish, when you will have a brilliant black surface. If it is not a flat surface, brush over with a coat or two of polish varnish, made the same as French polish, only a little thicker.

**EMBOSSING WOOD.**—The wood to be ornamented is first worked out to its proposed shape; then with a blunt steel tool, the pattern is made, by driving it cautiously so as not to break the grain of the wood, till the depth of the depression is equal to the intended prominence of the figures. The ground is then reduced by planing or filing to the level of the depressed part. After which the wood being placed in water, the part depressed will rise to its former height, and thus form an embossed pattern. Another process is to use metallic dies, which are made red-hot, and then pressed on the wood. The pattern being thus burnt in, the chased portions are brushed out, and the design finished by hand.