Carvers' and Gilders' Work.

GILDING.

(Continued from March number.)

If there is any knowledge fully in our possession, it is certainly that which comes to us by experience. That a certain material will float in the water, may be proved by a knowledge of its specific gravity; but we feel more fully assured of the fact if we have seen it tried; and our answer to an objector, "I have seen it floating in water frequently," is sufficient to silence opposers. There may be objections raised as to the following methods, but the rules laid down are from practical knowledge, and have been followed thousands of times, and produced capital work. We have made these remarks here, as in many works of some pretensions we have seen the processes of gilding described which could only end in disappointment to the learner or experimentalist. It is likely some of the cheap gilding executed in cities and other large places may not have the amount of work bestowed upon it as recommended in this article, but our object is to lead those seeking information in a path that will crown their efforts with success.

We have described the work usually undertaken by the carver and gilder, the tools he uses, also the preparations necessary for the work, and the present article will be devoted to the description of the work of laying on the preparations and gold.

After repeated drawing up, it is smoothed off with clean water and pumice stone. The thickness of whitening on the wood whould be 1-16th of an inch, and in some instances thicker. Care should be taken not to use the whitening and size when it is beginning to "turn off," as it then loses a great part of its adhesive quality. Different strengths must also be guarded against, as a strong coat of whitening size laid on a weak foundation will be likely to peel up when the after-preparations are laid on.

There are two kinds of gilding practised by the trade; one is called "oil gilding," the other "water gilding;" and the latter is both matt and burnished. Mouldings full of small members, and work full of ornaments, are generally gilt in oil, while broad flat surfaces and plain beads and hollows are gilt in water, and sometimes in oil. Matt and burnish gilding are often seen on the same moulding or piece or work.

In the article on composition ornaments we described the method of getting out, fixing on, and backing up the corners on frames, but have hitherto said nothing on mitreing up mouldings; this we shall consider shortly; and our first essay at gilding will be on an ornamental frame of broad moulding, mounted with corners, and will be "in oil."

OIL GILDING.

After the corners have been backed up and hardened by being in a dry place, the first care of the gilder is to wash the ornaments on the frame to free them from the oil and dust that may cover them in getting them out of the mould, and on to the frame. After this is dry, the coat of *thin white* is evenly laid on the frame. When this is dry, *stopping* is used to fill up the holes and defects in the mouldings, and to square up the corners that are damaged, and make good all ornaments that are chipped. When the stopping is hardened, the frame is ready for glass papering, and the back edge, hollows, beads, and flat parts of the frame are perfectly smoothed with *fine* glass paper. This is important, if good work is required to be turned out. Glass paper for a gilder's use is cut up into pieces about three inches square, and the sizes most generally used are No. 2, 1½, 1, 0. No very coarse glass paper is required. After well brushing out the frame with the *dusting brush*, it is ready for *clay*, which is mixed as in the foregoing article. When this is dry, it is ready for again fine glass papering, and next a coat of what is technically termed *clear cole*. This is a parchment size thinned down with water moderately, and put on warm. The object of thus sizing the work is to keep the next coat, which will be oil, from sinking into the surface. Two coats of this size are usually laid on, and it is much better to lay on two or more coats of weak than one of strong size, as the latter sometimes, if too strong, peels up. Size that has been kept a little too long, and commenced running or spoiling, is known to make first rate *clear cole*. After the size is dry, the frame will be ready for oil, and the workman mixes enough oil gold size to about the consistency of cream, and strains it through some clean linen rag screwed up tightly, forcing out the oil size. This oil gold size is laid on the frame very thinly and evenly with a brush. The thinner it is laid on the better, but great care must be exercised to touch the whole of the surface of the moulding, and to be most particular to brush in the oil to the bottom of the work. It is usual to put work in oil the last thing at night, so that it may be ready for gilding in the morning. It is known to be ready for gilding by the oil being *just tackey* and *nearly dry*, and in this state the gold will adhere firmly, and brush off bright; but if the oil has been laid on too thick, or the gold applied when it is too tackey or not dry enough, it will be dull, and greater care must be exercised in *skewing* in the gold, or the more prominent parts will have the gold brushed from the surface.

As before described, the gilder blows the gold out on the cushion, and cuts the leaves of gold up into convenient sized pieces to suit the various parts of the frame, and takes them up with the *tip*, and lays them on the frame till it is well covered with gold. In a frame gilded in oil the gold is ragged, and in many places of double and treble thickness. The gold is first carefully pressed down with a *dabber*, and then skewed well in with a *badger*. A rather long-haired brush set in quill is used, called a *skewing* brush, to brush out and off the frame all the skewings remaining. After this operation, the frame is ready for *finish size*. This is clear size, rather weak, laid on evenly with a hog's hair brush, and if it is thought desirable to deepen the colour of the gold, a little *ormolu* is added in order to give it a deeper and richer colour.

The *skewings*, which are the small particles of gold not required on the frame, are carefully put away and sold to the gold beater when a sufficient quantity has been collected.

The frame will now be complete when the back edge is brushed over with Oxford ochre, mixed with size.

WATER AND OIL GILDING.

After going through the operation of gilding a frame in oil, which is comparatively simple, the reader will be prepared to gild a more elaborate frame, finished with brilliant burnish on the corners, beads, &c., and a broad *double gilt* flat and hollow on the inside. It may be mentioned here, all the best work that is flat, such as broad insides to picture frames, spandrills, flat looking-glass frames, &c., are double gilt; and this is done to give the work a better colour and more solid appearance. That work of this class is superior there is no doubt, and that it was thought so in the time of Shakespeare may be inferred from the speech of Fabian in *Twelfth Night*, who says—

> The double gilt of this opportunity you let time wash off."

Some of the gilder's clients may perhaps think he overcharges a little for his work, but when he is anxious to please his customer with good work, it should be borne in mind both gold and time must be paid for, that have contributed to the result.

We will now describe the operation of gilding a broad frame made of Alhambra moulding, with corners and a broad flat inside. As a general rule the broad flat insides to frames are made separate, and fit into the rabbet of the outside frame when made. This is convenient to the gilder, as he gilds the flat in water apart from the frame.

The first thing the workman is careful to do is to see that the frame is free from dust, dirt, or grease; if not, to wash the frame with a brush and clean water, care being taken not to take off the sharpness of the ornaments in the operation. After it is dry, a coat of *thin white* is then applied, and then all holes, &c., are made good by *stopping*, and the parts to be burnished receive three or four coats of *thick white*. When the last coat of thick white is nearly dry, pass over the parts with the finger, which will help to smooth the rough surfaces. It may perhaps puzzle a novice what parts should be burnished in various descriptions of work, but a good rule will be to take the most prominent plain parts of the ornaments and the beads; and in the case of scrolls on a chimney glass, the scrolls fixed on for burnishing should be followed throughout with burnish. It requires taste and judgment to so distribute the burnish in any work that it may not be overdone and lose its effect, but judiciously placed, so that the *matted* portions will stand in strong contrast, and produce brilliant work. The frame is then carefully and thoroughly glass-papered till it is smooth, when it receives a coat of *clay*, and is again glass-papered and brushed down. Two coats of size, evenly laid on, follow, taking care that the first coat is thoroughly dry before the second is laid on. When this is done the frame is "put in oil," in the same way as before mentioned, and afterward all the beads and ornaments which have received the coats of thick white, and selected for burnishing, must be rubbed clean of every particle of oil. This is usually done by wetting a piece of calico, and ringing it out: commence by putting it round the second finger of the right hand, and pass