

of inlaid woods, called Torsela, Torsiatura, a mosaic wood work much practiced in Italy in the fifteenth century, in which architectural scenes, landscapes, birds, fruit and flowers, are pictured by inlaying pieces of wood of various colors and shades, into panels of walnut wood. It was first done in black and white only, but afterwards other naturally colored woods were adopted, and when these failed to give the required tints they were stained the color wanted; thus boxwood was stained yellow with saffron, while various tints of brown were produced by singeing or charring the surface with hot irons, or staining with dyes. This kind of work was frequently employed in decorating the altars of churches, door panels, chairs, wainscoting, etc.

The art of inlaying had fallen into disuse in England, until the Exhibition of 1851 gave an impetus to the practice, which has been so far sustained. The manufacture of both parquetry, and marquetry has become a most important business.

Another kind of inlaid work is called buhl work, so named after the inventor, André Charles Boule, and was extensively patronized by Louis XIV. The foundation and structural features are wood, which is pierced and inlaid with tortoise shell, enamels of different colors, silver plates, and ormolu, producing on the whole a most sumptuous effect. It was applied to tables, desks, workboxes and cabinets, its rich and gorgeous effect exactly suited the magnificence indulged in by the court at Versailles. Sometimes the tortoise-shell formed the ground, and metal and enamel the ornament. This costly style continued in vogue in France until the Revolution. Its inventor died in 1732, at the age of 90. He held the official position of *Tapissier en Litre du Roi*, and after his death his manufactory was carried on by his family.

A patent was taken out some years ago for a method of ornamenting wood by burning the pattern upon it with red-hot irons. This was an adaption of an old process, but in this case the pattern on the wood was simply a *fac simile* of the pattern of the iron, which appeared on the wood in a rich brown color. Birds, landscapes, border patterns, etc., were thus produced in brown on white pine, box, or other white wood. There was, however, an indistinctness or want of sharpness of outline, which was one reason why it did not obtain success.

A patent has been taken out for a very ingenious method of inlaying one wood into another. In this process veneers are glued on to the surface of the wood to be inlaid and allowed to dry; it is then subjected to the influence of steam for a considerable time, until it becomes softened to some extent. The pattern to be inlaid is formed or cut in zinc; this is placed upon the veneer and subjected to great pressure between iron plates, this pressure forcing the zinc and the veneer into the wood, and also forces up the wood through the interstices of the pattern to the exact thickness of the zinc. It is then dried and planed down to the level of the sunk veneer, and the pattern is as sharp and clean cut as if it were the best hand work.

It will be evident that, however it is done, it is a subject requiring a very large amount of artistic taste and skill both in design and execution, and although as regards the manipulation in cutting and shaping of both metal, wood and marble many and great improvements have been made in these latter days, more especially in parquetry for flooring, and veneer cutting, which has all tended to reduce the cost very materially, still these works if specially designed and executed by hand, must of necessity be very costly. Our principal object in describing them here is, first to show the kind of work to be done, and then to describe how the same may be imitated so as to produce works of decorative art and at a moderate cost. In pursuance of this object we purpose to first describe the various methods of imitating inlaid woods on painted work, and then to treat of staining and inlaying upon white pine and other white woods. The imitation of inlaid woods has been practiced by first-class grainers on painted grounds ever since graining became one of the useful arts.

Our first and most indispensable requisite for inlaying is a good and appropriate design, one that would be suitable for executing in the real wood. for it will be evident that although we have a wide range of ornamental forms which are suitable for this purpose, yet there are many designs which are totally unsuitable. Flat ornament, *i. e.*, without relief or shading, is the best in every respect for the purpose, although, of course ornament shaded, so as to appear in slight relief, is admirable for certain decorations, and some notable works have been executed in this style; but these may all be considered as exceptional works—necessarily of a high class—requiring artistic

skill of a high order, and, although coming with the range and province of the decorator's art, only to be used for special purposes.

Strap ornament, in the Elizabethan style, or interlaced lines of various breadths, arranged in geometrical forms, are well suited for inlaying. A series of lines of different colored woods running under and over each others embodied in a general design, afford a good opportunity for the display of knowledge and skill in design, and harmony in the disposal of the colors. Here we may take the opportunity to observe, in reference to the art of design, that we find a great number of workman who are able to execute works in a mechanical sort of way, and very accurately too, who have no knowledge of drawings or design; others again have a talent for putting scraps of ornament together and so producing what they are pleased to call original designs; there are others who are exceedingly economical in this respect, and make a few designs answer all purposes and go on year after year modifying and adapting these one or two designs, thus acquiring a reputation as decorators, founded upon an exceedingly small capital or originality. It is certainly a matter of surprise, considering the facilities for acquiring a knowledge of drawing and design within the reach of every one, how very few really original designs are produced. Ornament for inlaying should be specially designed for the article it is intended to decorate. A design which would be suitable for a cabinet, would not be appropriate for a door panel or a wardrobe. The style of ornament should always be a matter of consideration. The incongruous conglomeration of ornament we sometimes see applied in these ornamental days, is in many cases perfectly ridiculous. The design should be in accordance with the style of the article to be decorated. It is certainly a mistake and a bungling act, and shows a sad want of taste and knowledge, to put a Gothic ornament on a classic structure, a Chinese or Japanese ornament on a Gothic work, and yet this is done every day by those who have had the opportunity of knowing better.

The choice of woods for inlaying, will be in a great measure governed by the nature of the design, and the special purpose it is used for. Color also is quite as essential to the complete success of any work of this kind, as design, for however good the design may be, if the coloring is not harmonious the finished effect will be unpleasant to the eye. By a judicious use of the various colored woods, a richness, and even splendor of effect may be produced with quietness and repose: the two not being incompatible. In using wood inlays, we have the advantage that if we want a particular color and we have no natural wood of that color, we may with propriety, use a stain to produce the color we want. We have the highest authority for this practice. When imitating inlaid woods on painted work we should see that the ground for working upon is properly prepared, smoothness and a level surface is an indispensable requisite to the success of all good work, the ground should also be prepared of such a color as will serve for the lightest wood as well as the darkest. In some cases the ground may be white, but we prefer that as a rule it should be of a light cream color, depth and richness of color being produced afterwards by glazing. This is absolutely necessary, as it will be plain that if we were to paint in the various colored grounds for the different woods, we should make a very uneven surface, which would destroy the effect of the whole when finished. Care must be taken so to manipulate the different woods that when finished there shall be no difference in the level of the face of the work. In many cases the ground itself may be grained wood, such as maple, light oak, sycamore, etc. On these grounds the inlay must of necessity be imitations of woods of a much darker color and stronger grain than that upon which it is grained in order that the grain of the underwood shall not be perceived through the grain of the inlay. Walnut wood upon oak maple does this effectually, and as a simple inlay, is very effective and appropriate in color, and where breadth of treatment is desirable, two or three woods will often be found sufficient for all the purposes of effect both in design and color. A much more extensive use of this admirable style of decoration might be made if the decorator would be content to use simple designs, which would be comparatively inexpensive in the execution, and quiet in color. This is especially the case at the present time when so much new woodwork in dwelling houses and public buildings is being stained and varnished, or polished, on the bare wood, or left unstained. A wide field is here opened for the application of ornament in these cases, enhancing the beauty of the surface, while retaining and improving the natural beauty of the real wood.