

Carvers' and Gilders' Work.

COMPOSITION ORNAMENTS.

The ornaments with which gold frames are mounted are of comparatively recent date, as they first came into use about a century ago for figures on chimney pieces, and afterwards for picture frames. They are made from a mixture, for which the following receipt will be found to answer well: any quantity can be made in the following proportions:—

Boil seven pounds of the best glue in seven half-pints of water; melt three pounds of white resin in three pints of raw linseed oil. When the ingredients are well boiled, put them into a large vessel and simmer them for half an hour, stirring it, and taking care it does not boil over. When this is done, pour the mixture into a large quantity of whitening (previously sifted and rolled very fine), and mix it to the consistence of dough, and it is ready for moulding into the required shapes. The above compo will keep for a long time in a damp place, or in a barrel of whitening.

Compo, when cold, is very hard, and is heated by means of steam, when it assumes the consistency of dough.

The ornaments are made by pressing the compo into *moulds*. The moulds are made of boxwood, and the required ornament is counter-sunk in the wood by a man who is by trade a mould cutter.

Composition ornaments are got out in the following manner:

The workman takes the *mould* and well brushes into it oil and turpentine, to prevent the composition adhering to it. When composition enough, in a warm soft condition, is rolled up in the hands into a convenient form to go into the mould, it is pressed into every part very carefully by the fingers, and then a broad or flat surface of iron is wetted and placed on the compo remaining outside the mould, and the whole is put into an iron screw press, and the pressure, which is but for a few moments, drives the compo into all the deep parts of the mould and makes the board adhere to the back of the composition. When it is taken out of the press, the mould is removed from the ornament. After the compo has hardened a little, the ornament is cut off, and the remaining compo sliced off to be again heated and used. The ornament, when first cut off, is very soft and pliable, and can be then fitted to frames having beads, hollows, &c., without fear of breaking. These ornaments are fixed on with glue, and if corners to a frame, are sometimes supported with pieces of compo behind to secure them in the position required. When dry, they are quite hard and brittle, and are then to be *backed up*, that is, the spaces between the corner and the frame filled up with compo softened in hot water, which will make the ornament strong, and thicker than before. The mounting of these ornaments oftentimes requires skill and practice, as they have to be placed on a large proportion of the gilded articles sold in the trade. Some of the ornaments when made require supporting in other ways, beside that mentioned, as in the case of distinct fronds of ferns, a wire has to be placed throughout the back of the ornament, and secured by covering or backing up with compo, when it is found this beautiful but fragile pattern will wear well. Brackets, cornices, frames, whatnots, &c., each require the ornaments mounted so as to be graceful and suitable to the design.

The carver and gilder has a stock of moulds to suit the various descriptions of work. We have before remarked, the moulding manufacturer has facilitated the work of the carver and gilder, as the mouldings come to hand ready mounted with composition ornaments, so that in many instances the picture frame, when made, only requires suitable compo corners. Where looking-glass frames are made, they are mounted with handsome scrolls, &c., except where the pattern required is heavy and unsuitable for compo work, when, as mentioned before, the scroll pattern is carved out of soft wood, and whitened up.

On very large frames the ornaments are sometimes *papier-mache*, which is much lighter. These ornaments are made out of paper pulp, which is pressed between two moulds, and the ornament, when pressed, comes out thin and hollow. One advantage of these ornaments is that, if let fall, they are not so liable to break as compo. They are not held in favourable estimation by the gilder, as the paper pulp does not form such a good foundation for gilding as wood and composition.

The House of Lords and many of the best public places in the metropolis are decorated with *papier-mache* ornaments.

We will now say a few words on carving.

The ancient and classic cities of old attest by their ruins the antiquity of the art of carving. Capitals, columns, vases, and friezes show, as the poet Cowper wrote, that they did

"Not forget the carving and the gilding."

And not in stone only, but in wood they excelled, for figures of gods, heroes, and emperors, were cut most artistically; examples have come down to us in greater variety in stone owing to the more durable nature of the material.

From early times this art has been in requisition to represent incidents, fruit, flowers, &c.; and many of our mansions, manor houses, and choirs of ancient cathedrals show the beauty and extent to which the art has been carried. Gibbons, an English carver in the reigns of Charles the Second and James the Second, executed some beautiful work, which may be seen in Windsor Castle.

Before the art of Composition-ornament making was discovered the glorious paintings of the old masters were mounted in carved frames, and from this source alone the old carvers derived a good income. These frames are now imitated by composition ornaments. Frames made of broad deep mouldings, on which were carved leaves, bold ornaments and scrolls, were popular at a later period. Many very large frames are still carved, and bold light patterns are appreciated. The carver must be a man of taste, as he has often to do his best to imitate nature in flowers, foliage, and fruit. Unlike the carpenter or joiner, who works by rule, the carver must design as well as execute.

Soft wood is employed when the carved work is meant to be gilt, and wood of a harder description when it is meant to bear a polish and show the beauty of the grain. The soft wood is cut out of different thicknesses of planks, and in case of a deep pattern, a piece of wood is glued on. This plan has been found to answer well where the ornaments are gilded.

Scrolls, sweeps, fruit, flowers, &c., often decorate the centre and sides of a chimney glass, and when the design is made, the carver places it on the plank, and draws the outline, and also the holes which may be required in the pattern, and the whole is then cut out by a bow saw. The ornament thus cut out in the rough is secured to the bench, and the details worked out by gouges of various sizes and shapes. Although the ornamental scrolls and sweeps appear to be in one piece, yet oftentimes it is in several pieces. They are also generally chamfered after the details of the front have been put in, which gives the design lightness and elegance.

When a picture frame requires carving, it is generally made up first in the required wood, and afterwards carved the pattern decided on.

Much tact is necessary in using the tools of the carver, especially the gouges, as many sorts of wood would split if cut the wrong way of the grain. The use of the carver's tools can only be attained by practice.

The carver who supplies the cabinetmaker with work for chiffoniers, chairs, &c., does not generally supply carved ornaments for looking-glass, &c., which is almost a distinct branch of itself. These ornaments are roughly cut, and afterwards covered with whitening.

IMPROVED MITRE MACHINE AND FRAME VICE.—We will describe a simple, cheap, and durable device, by means of which frames can be easily made and put together without requiring the work of a skilled mechanic. It consists of a mitre-box for cutting the ends of the material to proper angles, and a vice which holds the frame firmly while being fastened together. The apparatus which is constructed of iron has on its table a square A, fig. 1. B B are two moveable blocks which clamp the moldings to be mitred against the sides of the square, by pressing against the back of the pieces, and thus not injuring the faces. The clamps are moved back and forth by a screw C, on which travels a block in fig. 2, to which are pivoted arms F, which are connected with blocks underneath the table as shown. The latter is hinged to the bench, and in fig. 2 is represented as turned up so as to show its under side. The motion of the screw and adjacent parts is indicated by the dotted lines. After one end of the molding is mitred, the piece is placed on the other side of the square, and its extremity adjusted to the mark on the measuring arm F, as denotes the length desired. It is then cut by the saw, thus obviating the trouble of measuring each side of the frame, and also the liability of mistakes. After the pieces are mitred, they may be placed on the square and clamped tight by the blocks, when they can be readily nailed together. Thus constructed, the sides will be accurately fitted, as, being firmly held during the fastening, they cannot move out of square. This operation repeated for the other corners, completes the frame. If, in fastening, it is found that the moulding has become sprung or twisted, the joint, we are informed, may be quickly made perfect by running the saw through it, thus enabling the operator to use