Gilt Edges.

The decoration of the edges is a matter of so much importance when we contemplate a "finished" book, that among the numerous methods we have at command it is wonderful that a more varied style of edge is not more usually seen. Decidedly, a gilt edge is as necessary to a well-bound book as the gold chain is to an alderman's robes.

To gild an edge properly requires the most scrupulous cleanliness, precision, and attention. The room in which this delicate work is carried on must be well lighted, and it must not be draughty, or the gold-leaf will flutter about or dust will settle on the damp edges. The requirements are: a book of gold-leaf, a gold-cushion, such as is used in finishing; a gold-knife, a few pieces of steel for scraping (these may be bought in various sizes and shapes), two or more burnishers, and it is advisable to have them both of agate and of bloodstone. A laying-press and cutting boards complete the necessary tools. Procure from the oilshops some red chalk; powder this, and place it on a piece of thick glass; mix with it a small quantity of blacklead, not too much, but just sufficient to take off the excessive redness of the chalk.

Break an egg and let the white fall into a cup, taking great care that none of the yolk is mixed with it; add six ounces of water to the white, and beat the whole until it appears all froth. Allow this to stand for a few hours, and then pour from this cup into another receptacle as much as will be required for present use. You have now everything ready to commence operations. Place the book between cutting-boards, the edge flush, lower gently into the press, and screw it up as tightly as possible. The edge must now be scraped very smoothly, in fact, as smooth as possible with a steel scraper: and as on this scraping depends the after-effect, too much care cannot be used in this part of the process. Next, with a soft sponge, first dipped into clean water to make it moist, rub on this smooth edge some of the red chalk powder, and go over it several times until it has assumed an equal tint. A brush must now be used (a good soft shoe-brush), and the edge must be brushed quickly until a good polish has been attained. This is the groundwork. The gold cushion will now be called into requisition. Take from the gold-book one leaf or more, cutting the leaf or leaves to the required size, ready to be taken up; with a camel's-hair brush take as much of the glaire-water as may be conveniently carried, and lay it carefully all over the edge. We have found a flat brush one-inch in width much more convenient than a mop, that is, a round one: the edge is much more quickly covered and much more evenly. The gold may now be taken from the cushion and laid gently down on the glaire, to which it will of course become attached; and care must be taken that every part of the edge is covered with the gold. The whole must now be left to get quite dry. It is not necessary to leave the press on the bench; it may be gently lifted down and stood up to dry; by this means several pressers may be used, standing round the room.

A few words may not be amiss about taking up the gold. Many gilders "take up" gold on pieces of thin card-board, others use a piece of wooden board; in either case it must be passed over the hair, face, or arms to grease it sufficient to cause the gold to adhere. There has lately been put into the market gold-leaf already adhering to the paper, and this may be used for "laying on:" it was prepared commercially for out-of-doors work, and we have no doubt is found very handy, as none of the gold-leaf can be blown away, but we have not
had an opportunity of trying this for book-edge gilding, although we believe it to be all
that may be desired.

When the edge is quite dry, the next process is to burnish it. Beeswax one side
of a piece of thin writing paper; this may be done by drawing the wax several times across
the paper: place the paper on the edge, wax side upwards, then with the agate, burnish
the edge gently all over, but with waxed paper between the agate and the edge. The edge
must next be slightly waxed, by first rubbing the wax on the palm of the hand, and then
rubbing the palm over the edge. Now take the bloodstone into use and burnish the edge
again: it will be found that fairly strong pressure is required; great care must however be
taken that the burnisher is held evenly, or the edge may be marked and spoiled. A final
polish is given with the agate and as much pressure applied as is convenient in order to get
as high a glaze as possible. The edge is now finished and may be taken from the press,
opened up by bending back the sheets, or knocking the book on the press. The other two
edges are treated in a like manner, only, in the case of the fore-edge, the book is knocked
up flat, if the book be in boards, or is gilt in the round for "solid" work. The process is
the same in gilding "solid," but the fore-edge is scraped while in the round, and this
of course requires a round scraper.

We trust we have made all this sufficiently clear to our readers; it was our intention
to have spoken on the gilding over marbled or red edges, &c., tooling of edges (sautré),
and other matters, but these we will reserve for a future paper.

James Burn and Company.

It was in the year 1781 that Thomas Burn, a native of Newcastle-on-Tyne, came up to
London, established himself in business as a bookbinder in Middle Row, Holborn—a
locality of which now no trace remains—and then and there may be said to have founded
the present House.

The records of the ensuing period are so meagre as to warrant (on the principle that
there is happiness where there is no history) the assumption that Burn was successful in
forming a sufficiently large connection to justify his removal to more extensive premises at
No. 37 Kirby Street, Hatton Garden, where he admitted his son, James F. Burn (the father
of the present head of the Firm), into partnership.

In 1834 William Chapman, one of the partners in the present Firm, came up from
Reading and entered the service of Mr. Burn. Speedily showing aptitude and capacity for
the business he became foreman, and subsequently general manager in the concern.

As "Burn and Son" the House obtained a share of the binding of the British and
Foreign Bible Society, and continued to work for that Institution for a period extending
over forty years. Such work was steady, fairly remunerative, and might reasonably have
been supposed likely to continue to give employment to the staff of excellent workmen that
it had called together. But there are risks and chances in all trades; and in 1842, a change
in the arrangements of the British and Foreign Bible Society caused the sudden withdrawal
of their work from the hands of their four binders, of whom Burn was one.

Contracts for the binding were placed with one house; and of the four who were "left
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