

## Preserving Bindings.



CORRESPONDENT of *The English Mechanic* recently asked for information how to preserve the leather bindings of books, and received in reply the following, which we give for what they are worth:—

PROCURE some thin mastic varnish. Make a solution of 20-grs. of corrosive sublimate (poison) in 1-oz. of spirits of wine. Add this to a pint of the mastic varnish, and paint lightly over the covers of the books with the mixture after it has stood and cleared itself. The operation should be performed in a warm, dry room. Keep a small piece of naphthaline (also called "albo-carbon") on each bookshelf. You need fear no further attacks from insects.—S. BOTTONE.

HALF-A-CENTURY ago I learned that Russian leather bindings were very obnoxious to all insects. A good sized book placed here and there between other volumes appears to answer well. In India the so-called "Fish Insect," a fætid, transparent, shrimp-like creeper, eats his way rapidly through a thick book, as surely as a rabbit in the ground. If your books are on shelves in a glass case, you can rout the enemy by keeping large lumps of camphor, or sponges saturated with creosote, each in a perforated tin box, near the books (but creosote stains everything, and requires care in its use); it is a most potent insecticide. In the North of India I could occasionally buy a skin of Russian leather when the Kabul caravans came down, and used to keep it in my trunks for perfume and protection. This article seems to have been known in the East for centuries. In Sâdi's poems he says—

"The star Canopus shines all over the world;  
But the scented leather comes only from Yemen."—Eos.

FROM your description of the manner in which the books are destroyed, I should think your book-case was a home for innumerable beetles. A few years ago my father had the backs of a number of valuable books destroyed in a similar manner to yours. At first he could not tell the cause of it, but he afterwards found out that the room in which he kept the books was inhabited by beetles. They could not be seen during the day, but if you went into the room with a light late at night, they were running about in all directions. We killed a number by setting traps—a tin biscuit box without a lid, and a little oatmeal at the bottom, if set at night, would have a number in next morning. If you find out that they are beetles that are troubling you, the best way will be to try and get rid of them by traps, and if you cannot, to move the books to some place where the pests cannot get to them.—N. EDWARDS-ROBSON.

IF the leather is destroyed by the "book-worm" (so called), place at the back of the books, as they stand in the case, cotton wool saturated with oil of eucalyptus. You will find in a short time the depredation will cease, as all insects have a strong objection to the odour of the oil, and quickly quit its locality or perish by suffocation from the pungency of the same. I always keep a supply in my own bookcase, as it not only preserves the volumes from the ravages of insect life, but always imparts a pleasant and, to my mind, refreshing odour to the volumes themselves.

## Answers to Correspondents.

TOXO.—(1) How can the smell of lime be removed from old books and prints that have been bleached? [You can never quite remove the smell, but you may get rid of a great deal of it by adding a little Acetic Acid to your bath of clean water, and by exposing the sheets to the air as much as possible.]

(2) I have an old folio to bleach. How can I best size the leaves when clean, as they are too thin to bear handling whilst wet? [If you can handle your book for washing, you can surely dip it for sizing. If very thin, lay the sheet on a good stout sheet of paper that will stand the strain, and dip it as usual.]

APPRENTICE.—Can you inform me how relief printing in gold is done on notepaper? [You must first make a matrix for your die, which may be done by forcing wet shoe leather into the die by means of the press; after repeated strokes of the press, take a piece of gutta-percha, warm it and spread it upon a scrap of tough paper, fasten it to the leather and repeat the pressure till a good impression is obtained. Then take off and pare the matrix neatly round to prevent it marking the paper. The colours used are dry vegetable colours mixed with white crystal varnish. The colour is dabbed into the die with a brush and the face of the die cleaned with a piece of rag; an impression is then taken and gold bronze dusted over the coloured relief impression. When thoroughly dry, it is again placed in the press and the head brought down on it once or twice to burnish it.]

(2) What is the best way of mounting large maps or builders' plans on cloth? [For ordinary work use Jaconet; for extra strong work Union. First wet a good flat wooden board large enough for the work, lay the material for lining out on the wet board, pulling it out perfectly flat but not stretching it. Paste the map or plan thoroughly with thin paste, lay it on the lining, rub down firmly with a folder on a piece of paper and leave to dry thoroughly. When dry pull it off and you will have a good piece of work without blisters.]

(3) [It is mainly in the skill of the workman. It is too lengthy a subject to be dealt with here, but we shall be dealing with the whole subject ere long.]

E. J. D.—Can you give me a good preparation for varnishing maps? [First size, with size made by boiling down parchment cuttings. Then use white hard varnish. If too thick, thin down with spirits of wine. Lay on with a soft flat brush.]

G. COOK.—In finishing coloured calfs and persians, is the use of urine or vinegar necessary? or has its use any detrimental effects? [They are not necessary. They may be detrimental for light calfs.]

APPRENTICE (Whitehaven).—(1 and 2). [The very best thing to use for finishing is egg albumen (glair), and that only. That is our advice.]

(3) What will take varnish off persian leather so as to make it suitable for finishing again? [It must be well washed off with a cotton wool pad soaked in spirits of wine; but be careful where the copal is removed not to rub the leather too much.]