

An American Binder in a London Bindery.

UPON a visit to Tout's establishment in London I found the head of the firm and his foreman engaged in certain specialities requiring their personal attention, and which they preferred to do in a quiet way by themselves.

Saturday appeared to be one of the days when they would be less likely to be interrupted, as the finishers, forwarders, and other employées quit work at noon.

On my arrival, Mr. Tout remarked that I was just in time to see the process of tree marbling as practised by him. He had one hundred or more volumes to tree marble, and the foundation work of paste washing, colouring, and sizing the leather had already received attention.

The foreman was at work at the bleaching process, and he placed in my hands for inspection a small octavo volume of about 300 pages. He informed me that when first received by the firm, the paper was very discoloured. The book was purchased by the owner at a cost of £14, and it was surprising to see what a perfect book was made of it by the handiwork of the bleacher, forwarder, and finisher. It should also be added that it was bound in full crushed levant morocco, accompanied by harmonious skill in the display of tooling and lettering.

Mr. Tout showed himself an expert in producing tree marble to perfection, and yet on an average he could marble a book in two minutes. This should not be lost sight of by the reader, for tree marbling, as well as marbling of any ordinary character, must be expeditiously executed.

In the process of tree marbling, as adopted by Mr. Tout, there are a few points worthy of notice and not described in technical books. He does not use a pail for the water necessary for the work, nor does he utilise "rods and trestles." Neither does he select a corner of a room for marbling, or strew sawdust upon the floor to absorb the superfluous water which some marblers throw around. As a substitute for the rods and trestles he prefers an arrangement of his own, which is an open framework of light construction, the opening at the top being so arranged that books of various sizes can be readily placed in the proper position for marbling.

Within the open frame a block of wood is placed, and upon this the front of the book rests, while the boards of the book are laid upon the top part of the frame; but in order to secure the slight elevation necessary at the upper part of the book small rolls of paper are tucked underneath the boards to give the proper height to allow the water to run down.

Zinc pans are used as receptacles for the water. These are excellent substitutes for the pails commonly employed. One of these pans is placed on each side of the wooden frame previously mentioned, that on the right hand being selected for the sprinkling water, while that on the left side is for the purpose of applying water by means of a well-filled sponge, which is squeezed so that the water can fall upon the covers after the marbling is completed, and for the purpose

of removing any superfluous colour. This process is followed by the use of a half-dry sponge for the removal of any remaining water which may appear upon the surface of the leather. The book is then stood on end to dry for a limited time, and the boards are bent to their original flat condition.

The first part of the process in tree marbling is to slightly bend the boards inward, and then place the book in the frame as previously described. A sharp bend in the boards is not good, but at the top it should not be quite so rounded in form as at the lower end. Upon the back of each book there is placed a strip of tin or zinc, of the width and length of the back, to prevent the water and colours from reaching the back, for in tree marbling the original foundation colour of the leather should remain plain.

The tin being properly adjusted, a sponge is taken and squeezed so that a few drops of water fall in the centre of the boards, and the point of the finger is lightly applied to the drops downward to help to form the trunk of a tree. This done, a birch brush is dipped to the bottom of the pan of water, and when removed the water is shaken over the leather; and if not enough water has been thrown on at the first effort, more sprinkling of water must follow on those parts which would otherwise demonstrate faulty work.

Immediately following the application of water the colours are sprinkled on. The first colour thrown on is a strong solution of copperas, the second colour being a solution of salts of tartar of moderate strength. The application of these colours requires equally as much attention and rapidity of movement as that mentioned concerning the water.

Another movement at this point requires notice, and that is the formation of a knotty appearance upon certain parts of the tree marble. This is done by means of a light pressure of a finger after the last colour has been applied and before the colours have set; but whether a little grease is made to help the production of a good knot (as it usually is) my inquisitiveness did not extend far enough to inquire.

The colour brushes used are similar to our paste brushes, and appeared to equal in size our largest paste brushes, known to us as 2½-inch brushes.

With respect to the birch brush, the birch part appeared to be a foot or more in length, and sufficient to distribute water freely at any desired part of the covers. This is important, and a brush made from broom corn, would possibly answer the same purpose.

All of the marbling requisites upon the common work bench, slightly protected and opposite a window, and the good judgment and calculation of the amount of water and colours needed for each book shewed the experience of a thorough marbler. However, to those who may be apt to flit the contents of any brush to an unnecessary distance, I would suggest the use of a third pan in which to place the marbling frame.

Again, in referring to the strips of tin, I must say that I took particular notice that they were not bent to correspond with the round of the back, nor turned over at the side edges to a gutter shape, as recommended by some, and yet upon inspection I did not see that any of the water or colours had reached the back.—WM. CREED, in *The American Bookmaker*.