

On the Decoration of the Edges of Books.

TAKING up again the question of edges, when one thinks of the many and varied simple methods which may be used for their decoration, it is all the more astonishing that we see so much of the plain sprinkled edge. To sprinkle the edges of a book, the usual method is to take a little dry colour, preferably brown, and grind it in a mortar with a little paste, adding a few dry drops of sweet oil and a small quantity of water in order that it may rub well; when sufficiently incorporated, the whole is thinned to proper consistency. The book is then tied together, or placed in the lying press, and the edges are sprinkled by dipping the brush in the coloured liquid and beating it on a wooden rod or iron handpin over the edges in as fine a spray as possible. The object of the oil is that the edges shall be the more easily burnished; should the colour rub, it may be taken for granted that the colour requires the addition of more water. In mixing up a large quantity of sprinkle for use, should the period of its requirements spread over three or four months, it may be found that towards the end of that time the colour rubs and does not work as it did at the commencement; this may at once be obviated by adding more water to make up for the loss by evaporation. Another reason for the colour rubbing is, that some workmen take from the top of the coloured liquid only, thus allowing the heavier portions of colour to fall to the bottom of the receptacle; it is therefore advisable to make a rule that the whole be stirred each time it is used.

A few binders (especially country binders) make use of a second colouring matter—for instance, green on a brown—with very pleasing results. But try it in this manner: place your book in the press, upon its edge place a little damp sand—not wet, but just damp enough to make it adhesive; now throw a moderately fine sprinkle over it; allow this to dry without disturbing anything (it will take but a few seconds); again more sand; now a heavy coating of sprinkle; when the whole is dry, it may be moved from the press, and if attentively done the effect will have a pretty mottled and somewhat marbled appearance; or the edge can be made to present a still more marbled appearance by using two or more colours, and it will be readily understood that if three or more layers of sand be used, the greater will be the range of tone. Again, it might be varied by using a different colour to each layer of sand. Every experienced binder knows that bread-crumbs, rice, fern-leaves, lace, small bits of cotton, straw, in fact, everything one may think of a suitable size, has, or may be called into requisition at one time or another.

We know that to country binders the question of edges is of great importance, for we hear much of the amount of trouble they are put to in getting their edges marbled. We knew of one binder who had a series of templets cut; and if we surmise rightly, the Greek key-pattern prevailed in all sizes denoting his favourite choice. There were many other patterns kept suspended for ready use, and, being cut from thin metal, lasted a long time.

But another plan may be adopted by using sponges charged with colour: these dabbled gently on the edges give a good effect. We have seen many books the edges of which had been decorated by passing a sponge charged with colour over the edge, and before the colour had set, a comb had been drawn along it in an irregular line somewhat after the method adopted by the "grainers" of the present day. A simpler manner, after the edges

had been coloured, was to draw the sponge, which had been used to colour the edge, down the centre of the edge in a wavy direction.

As a last remark concerning sprinkling, we would advocate the use of—for want of a better name—a coarse wire sieve and a coarse shoe-brush; a wire cinder-sifter answers the purpose extremely well. Should such a one be made to order, let us advise that it be made of brass wire, for the obvious reason that brass, being impervious to rust, will last a long time. To use such a sieve, dip the brush in the colour, giving it two or three jerks to fling off the superfluous colour. The brush may be then gently rubbed, very lightly at first, when the colour will fall in a fine spray—indeed, very much finer than it is possible to produce by the old and general method of beating the brush on a stick or handpin. With these general remarks on the more simple ways of decorating edges, we shall be pleased to hear that they have been the means of lightening the labours of many of our fellow-craftsmen.

Dr. Frazer's Process for Cleaning Prints and Printed Paper.

To the Editor of THE BOOKBINDER.

SIR,—I notice in your interesting periodical some queries about the best process for removing stains from printed paper, title-pages and engravings. As the process I employ has never yet been published by me and after long trial have invariably found it successful, I enclose you a brief account of the mode of procedure I have been led to adopt, and should be glad if those interested in bookbinding, etc., find it as advantageous as it has proved in my hands.

20, *Harcourt Street, Dublin*, Mar. 13, 1888.

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I HAVE long since found all attempts to clean prints by the ordinary methods, such as chlorine water, solutions of chloride of lime, or chlorinated soda, to be disastrous, disintegrating the tissue of the paper, which gradually passes into decay, becoming friable and worthless. This led me to employ the following process, which I can recommend after many and protracted trials.

Make a solution of crystallized permanganate of potash in the proportion of about one quarter of an ounce to a pint of tepid or cool water: pour this freely over the print or paper, which will assume a dark brown colour. It is best done in a flat vessel of glass or earthenware such as photographers employ, but for large prints I use a vessel made of wood and steeped in melted paraffine, which renders it watertight.

The process can be now finished without delay, or if more convenient, the browned print can be laid aside for a time. Drain off the superfluous brown liquid (which is the well-known fluid sold as *Condy's Disinfecting Solution*), and wash with two or three ablutions of cool or cold water; then add about as much liquid sulphurous acid, in the proportion of a fluid ounce to a pint of water, as will completely bleach the paper; I find a drachm or two of oxalic acid also a useful addition to remove ink stains. The paper gradually assumes a