

## French Marbled Papers.



JUST now, when we are giving a series of articles on marbling, a reprint from Fichtenberg, an old-time European marbler, may be interesting as a comparison with modern processes:—

“The white flat paper was first selected with regard to its surface smoothness and other properties. If not sufficiently sized, each sheet was taken separately and coated with extra size by means of a soft long-haired brush. Then it was lifted on a T-piece and hung across the drying strings. When a high degree of polish was an object it was attained by passing the paper, sheet by sheet, between two copper cylinders. If a white ground (from Mendon white) was employed, the paper was designated as *lisse*; when talc was used, it was known as *satined*.

“Each workshop contained a shallow tub which was rather larger than the paper. That wooden receptacle, generally constructed of oak, had its joints or corners protected by waterproof covering. A small round stick, earthen pans with lids, a charcoal stove, a marble slab and a brayer or pestle for grinding any colours which were not properly levigated, completed the shop furniture. The earthen pans were for the various colours. By turning into a separate pan about half a pailful of water, dissolving in that 91 grams of tragacanth and stirring the mixture from time to time during five or six days, the gum was prepared. It served as a bed for the marbling tints.

“A stronger gum solution was kept for use whenever it was desired to thicken that which was already in the marbling tub. Overnight the workman prepared a mixture of beef suet beaten up with an equal weight of water, to which he added a little gum camphor dissolved in alcohol. He also melted a quantity of beeswax over a slow fire, and added enough turpentine to make it about the consistency of honey, which he kept stirring in all the while that the wax mixture was being made.

“The colours usually employed were of vegetable origin, those from mineral bases being too heavy to float on the gum surface. They were taken in a powdered state and mixed upon the slab with the prepared wax, and then preserved in their separate pans. The gum was poured into the shallow marbling tub. Sufficient alum was added until the gum was of a proper consistency. That fact was ascertained by taking a little colour prepared with the beef suet mixture, and throwing a drop of it on a few spoonful of gum sampled in a gallipot.

“If, when stirred with a small stick, the colour thus dropped took a spiral form without dissolving, the gum was regarded as strong enough. On the contrary, if the volute did not form, the gum was too strong and water had to be added to it. When the colour spread and dissolved, it was known to be too thin, and more gum was added. As soon as the right consistency had been determined, the gum was emptied into the oak marbling tub. The consistency of each colour was regulated in a similar manner, less suet being used whenever sized paper was employed.

“The colours were scattered, one after another, upon the surface of the gum by means of brushes, made of osier twigs and long bristles, which sprinkled them in irregular spots. Then they were stirred spirally. A favourite marbling of that day in France was the ‘partridge eye.’ It was made by using Italian yellow and carmine lake with light and dark indigo. A small quantity of turpentine was added to the colour thrown last upon the gum. That was done for the purpose of better incorporating the final colour with those which had been previously cast.

“Sheet by sheet the paper was then taken and placed lightly next to the gummy surface, thus intermixedly tinted. The marbling of each sheet was accomplished by transfer in a moment, when a boy promptly caught the sheet on a peel and lifted it from the tub to the drying strings. Two sheets could be printed at once by using a contrivance resembling a paper stainer’s block, which the workmen wore on either hand.

“When the colours became exhausted new tints were sprinkled on, and in that manner the figure of the marbling was continually altered. It was essential when preparing an original pattern, or in matching a specimen sheet, to bear in mind that the veins were the first splashes of colour thrown on the gum.”—*American Bookmaker*.

A LAUGHABLE bibliographical hoax was perpetrated fifty odd years ago by a genius who had printed and sent out one hundred copies of a catalogue of books said to be owned by Count de Fortsas. The professed collection consisted of only fifty-two articles, yet each one was said to be *unique*. It was announced that a sale of the books would take place on a certain date at Binche, an insignificant village of Belgium, and thither repaired a number of the most eminent bibliographers of Europe, each hoping that none of the others would know of *his* going, and each intent upon securing the rarities. Arriving at Binche, the eager collectors were informed that the authorities had concluded to purchase the collection for the honour of the town, and retain it at home. The whole affair was a hoax. The Count de Fortsas was a myth, and the unique treasures of his collection had no other existence than in this plausible little catalogue, which has itself become a rarity and curiosity in the field of bibliography. The author of the hoax was M. Rene Chalons, of Brussels.

WORKHOUSE LITERATURE. — The Free Literature Society seems to have some peculiar notions as to what affords interesting reading for inmates of workhouses, to judge by a recent batch of books sent to the Kettering Union, the guardians of which have become annual subscribers to the society. The master brought the books before the board, and amongst them were the following: “The Manufacture of Bleaching Powder,” an 1862 “Guide to London,” a “Chronology of the Soap Trade,” “The Oil and Colour Man,” “Improvements in Acid Manufacture,” “Condensation of Noxious Vapour,” and “German almanacs.” Truly a fascinating series!