

On Marbling Leather.



WE wish first to impress upon our readers that in marbling, success *entirely depends* on the quickness with which it is executed. It is also important that the colours, sponges, brushes, and water should be previously disposed in proper order and at hand, so that any one of them can be taken up instantly. Another point to which attention should be directed is the amount of colour to be thrown on the leather, and consequently the amount that each brush should hold; again, the colour must be thrown on whilst the water that is used in the process is running down, so that while running it carries the fine sprays with it, thus forming veins or fine lines spreading out into the most fascinating forms, stopping one moment only to start again into another direction, until the water or the colour has expended itself.

The preparation for marbling the cover of a book, is to paste wash the leather as for colouring.

Using the salts of tartar as the colouring medium, two or three coats should be applied, allowing each to dry properly before the next; this drying is of great importance in marbling, more so than any other style of decoration, for if the leather be not thoroughly dry while being marbled the water will sink in, taking the colour with it, instead of carrying it over the leather. Two days are not too long to allow between the operation of paste-washing and marbling.

When the leather cover has been tinted to the desired shade, which, by the by, should be rather richer than for plain hand-coloured calf, it should be sponged over with a thin but even coat of glaire; a few drops of milk may be added to the glaire with advantage, this prevents the glaire from frothing, a matter not to be forgotten, as every bubble occasioned by the froth will become a white spot round which the colour has run.

Fresh copperas (sulphate of iron) should always be prepared for marbling, and very strong; indeed we prefer to use a saturated solution; but great care must be exercised, or the result will be too dark. The salts of tartar should be rather weaker than for sprinkling. Have then ready to hand the copperas and the tartar, each in its own pan and with its own brushes, prepare a pail of water, with a bunch of birch twigs to throw the water on with, and a sponge to wash the covers when marbled, and all other requisites.

It is almost necessary to have a special place or room to marble in, as the water is thrown about and the colours stain very quickly; but where marbling is being done to any great extent, a wooden trough lined with zinc is an excellent receptacle. A very good size is a box, 4 feet by 2 feet, 3 or 4 inches high; with this there need be no fear of any water finding its way through to the next ceiling. *Willesden paper* is perfectly proof against water, and we have often used a trough made of it by bending the sides up and clipping the corners with an American clip. When done with, the clips are taken off and the sheet laid

flat or rolled up, and placed in a corner out of the way until wanted again. It is also desirable to have a pair of trestles with a long board or flat rod resting at each end. Place the book between these boards with covers extended resting on the rods; should it be desired to let the marble run from back to fore-edge, the back of the book must be elevated a little by placing a small piece of wood under the boards of the book at the joints. If to run from head to tail, then the rod must be raised at that end, in any case raised only enough to allow the water to run slowly and evenly.

Charge each brush well, knock out on a hand-pin the superfluous colour until a fine spray comes away from the brush; holding the black brush in the left hand, take up as much water in the birch as it will hold, throw this on to the covers until the blotches of water unite and commence to run down; dropping the birch, take quickly the black brush in the right hand and beat it on the hand-pin over the covers, sprinkling it very evenly and as fine as possible. When sufficient has been thrown on, beat the brown colour over the cover in like manner. The colours will gain in density and beauty in a few seconds, when the whole may be washed freely with the sponge, and it should then be set up to dry.

The operation of "tree-marbling" is managed in the same manner, but the water, instead of running from the back to the fore-edge, as best it may, must be made to flow from head to tail, and from the sides of each board towards the centre. To assist this, the boards of the book are slightly bent, and the rods upon which the book is placed must be slightly elevated at the top; a little water being squeezed from a sponge at the top and centre of each board, must be allowed to run down; water is then thrown on with the birch, causing the necessary flow towards the centre and lowest part of the boards. The larger quantity of water being in the centre of the boards prevents the fine spray of iron striking on the leather and there remaining white, the water thrown on with the birch in irregular patches causing or forming the branches giving the appearance of a tree formation. It will thus be seen the whole result is caused by the manner in which the water is allowed to run. The best effect is obtained by using very little water, only just sufficient to make the blotches of water join each other, and thus have a distinct but gradual flow towards the lower edge of the boards. It is necessary to have as fine a spray as possible fall from the brush with iron solution, or the lines will be very thick.

To tree-marble calf on the skin for half-bindings, the skin is prepared by paste washing, colouring and glairing as done on the book, the skin is then laid upon a board, the board being slightly elevated at one end, water is then thrown on evenly all over, and sprinkled with the iron and brown. Should a longer flow or stem be desired it can be had by placing under the skin a few small stones, or pieces of wood: the leather resting on these divert the flow of water into another channel; but on no account may the leather touch iron, or it will, as all bookbinders know, or should know, stain it badly.

After the leather has been marbled it should be washed freely, using a sponge and plenty of water.