

## A WORD ABOUT CRYSTOLEUM-PAINTING.



THE art of crystoleum-painting is in favour at present, and is likely to be extensively practised, for, simple though it is, the results are effective and telling when the execution is skilfully performed. Those who do not know anything of its nature might well take a crystoleum painting at a short distance for a miniature on porcelain or a painting on copper, so delicate and finished is its appearance. And yet the finish is only in appearance, for no fine working, no hatching or stippling, is required to secure the effect. Rapidly accomplished, cleanly to work at, with no after process to go through such as is indispensable to china-painting, it is sure to become a favourite with many who delight in producing striking pieces without any great labour.

Although we have no feeling of sympathy with any who shirk a difficulty in preference to overcoming it, yet there are cases where time is an object, and then to have a sketch ready to hand is, to say the least of it, tempting; and this the photograph enameller always enjoys. Crystoleum-painting is carried out on two convex glasses, the tints being laid in with oil-colours. The materials required are few in number: the glasses, the photograph, a bottle of paste, and two of preparation, oil colours and brushes, some strips of gummed paper and some American clips. Any photograph of figures may be chosen, but it should be a good one without defects. The most telling are those where the details are few, and the subject is rendered in a bold, free style. Flesh tints show well against a rich, dark background, therefore select a picture where these are to a large extent represented. The accessories of a portrait or figure subject are as important as the head or figures; for if these are inharmonious or incongruous, the work cannot be satisfactory. The method of ornamenting the glasses varies slightly, but that our readers may choose for themselves, we will describe two styles: they will then have the chance of deciding on the merits of each. The first and most important point to remember is that it is on the concave side of both glasses that the colours are applied. These glasses must be free from flaw, scrupulously clean, and innocent of any finger-mark; a chamois leather will polish them up better than anything else, as it leaves no fluffy particles on the surface. Plunge the photograph in water, and out again; put a layer of paste over the back of the convex glass with the fingers; lay the photo on this face downwards, cover over with parchment-paper, and quickly press out all the surplus paste, until not a particle of it is to be seen, and the picture lies smooth, without the slightest crease upon the glass.

To manage this dexterously may be found to need some practice; the principal thing is to work rapidly, but without flurry, to press from the centre outwards, the glass being held with the face slightly raised towards the worker, the fingers being pressed on the

back. There is an instrument sold for the purpose, but excellent enamels are done without its aid. Lift off the parchment-paper and rub the back of the photo gently with sand-paper. The first preparation is now to be used; put a wash of it over the back of the picture, and then lay it aside for twenty-four hours. Remove any overplus of preparation with tissue-paper, and wash over the second preparation; this will dry as soon as applied, and the painting may be commenced at once.

All the tints are laid on the first glass except the flesh tints, and they are left entirely for the second. Great care must be observed that none of the colours overflow their outlines. The eyes must be painted with a fine brush very delicately; for blue eyes, use ultramarine with just a little ivory black; for grey, ultramarine modified with Vandyke brown and white. The whites of the eyes must be laid in with white and just a suspicion of Naples yellow, and perhaps a little blue; the glint of light in the eye must be touched in with pure white. For the lips, use carmine or vermilion, softened with white to the required tint.

On the mouth so much of the expression of the face depends that it will well repay any time and care expended on it. If the colour spreads farther than it should into the flesh tint, the shape of the lips, and consequently the expression of the mouth, will be changed, and the likeness cannot be true to nature.

When all is completed that is to be done on the first photograph glass, fix the second to it with a strip of gummed paper round all the edges, then fasten the two securely together with the clips; if they shift in the slightest degree after the second painting is commenced, the enamel cannot be quite satisfactory—that is, unless the accident is at once noticed, and the glasses placed in position again.

On the back of the second glass the final painting is now to be performed. The flesh tints are laid on very thickly, almost like a paste; use carmine, white, and a little Naples yellow, or in place of the carmine, vermilion, according to the subject. Vary the complexions, having regard to the age and sex of the persons represented. It would never do in a group to have all the complexions of the same hue as each other: some must be fairer, some darker, some pale, and some with a bright rosy tinge. Study nature, and in art it is then impossible to go far wrong. Flesh tints require but little shading, and are simply laid on, without any attempt at high finish. Every tint that was laid on the first glass may be strengthened on the second; or, if occasion demand it, they may be altered by having another tint laid on the second, unlike that on the first.

In the background and the draperies, for instance, very beautiful effects might be obtained in this way. A preparation of size is used with the colours on this glass, but on no account must it be added to those employed on the first. Every portion of the

glass must be covered with some colour. Be sure where and how the tint is to be laid before touching the glass with the brush, and turn the face of the enamel up constantly, so as to be sure that every stroke is correctly given, and that the tints are the best that can be used. Every one is liable to make a false stroke in a hurry, or if suddenly interrupted while at work; the remedy for such mistakes will be found in rectified spirits of turpentine, but it must be used with caution, lest the colours merge into one another.

When all is finished, place the glass on some thick cardboard, and mark off the size of it with a pencil; cut it round, and then fix it to the back of the glass with a strip of gummed paper. Any chance of air getting to the enamel must be averted, or the work will have been done in vain.

The second method mentioned requires but brief notice. Instead of the paste, some artists use starch, and in lieu of the sand-paper for removing the back of the photograph, they immerse the glass, with the photograph adhering to it, in oil. The starch is made as follows:—A tea-spoonful of corn-flour is moistened with cold water and rubbed down till quite smooth; a little boiling water is then added to it, until it is about as thick as milk. It is then put into a saucepan and placed over the fire, but on no consideration must it be allowed to boil; after this, it is poured off into a jar or basin, and left to cool.

The photograph, if on a card, must be removed. Put it in a deep plate, throw over it boiling water, and leave it to cool; continue to do so until it floats off the card, but do not attempt to hurry it by pulling it off, for if it tears it is spoilt. Place it between blotting-papers until dry. When both photograph and starch are ready, dip the finger in the latter, and pass it over the back of the glass, leaving a thin coating over every part; repeat this process on the face of the photograph, and at once lay it in position on the glass, then press it as before described, from the centre outwards, until no air-bubbles or particles of starch are visible. Parchment-paper may be dispensed with; a soft clean linen handkerchief can be rolled round any suitable instrument, and with this the starch may be pressed from beneath the photograph. To render the photograph transparent, it is laid, when fixed on the glass, in a bath of sweet oil; a saucer or plate will do for small pictures, a shallow basin for larger ones. It remains in the oil for a week or more, till perfectly transparent, when the oil is to be dried off it with a linen handkerchief, and the painting can be commenced.

As to frames, choose plush, of a colour that harmonises with the enamel. It is soft-looking, and throws up a delicately-toned painting to advantage; and that is the one great desideratum in a frame—that it should not overpower but enhance the beauty of that which it surrounds.

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## OUR GARDEN IN APRIL.



**A**PRIL is perhaps the first month in the year in which we begin to talk about the long summer days and what we are intending to do in them among our flower-beds, in our kitchen-garden, and in this newly-erected suburban greenhouse of ours, of which we are so justly proud. In fact, we are in the full tide of work, and find it therefore necessary more than ever to have a thorough system to carry out, having long ago come

to the conclusion that the hope of achieving successful gardening is to work by routine.

Once again, then, we find ourselves in our greenhouse, and the old difficulty presents itself which comes, like all the rest, periodically round at this time of year, namely, the increasingly overcrowded state of affairs inside. We dare not begin bedding out just

yet, for the winter may again rage over us, so that we never consider ourselves fairly out of the wood until May is almost left behind. Plenty of air, then, we must give our greenhouse in its unavoidably crowded state, as this will tend more than anything else to harden off our entire stock, and embolden us to begin bedding out at a proportionately earlier date; and then as to watering our plants. From now and through the entire summer, all potted plants *must* have a steady supply of water, for any neglect in this respect can only entail disastrous failure.

But one very practical remedy for relieving the overcrowded state of your house is to run your eye over it and select some of your duplicate plants, and carry them off to any pit or frame you may chance to have, or else take them away in-doors, either to your window garden or into any place of safe shelter. And this reminds us that by this means we can begin what is called hardening off some of our strongest plants with a view to early bedding out; and for this purpose our potting shed, or any good outhouse, will be of great service, or by standing one or two long planks or boards against a wall having a south aspect many of our calceolarias and geraniums even might be safely trusted upon it, provided only some protection of tarpaulin or matting be given to young plants at night.

And then as to the ventilation question, to which we