

WHAT IS SILICINE?



DESIGN FOR PANEL OF GLASS DOOR IN SILICINE.

OF late years great ingenuity has been displayed by inventors to satisfy the demand for attractive and facile methods of executing decorations for houses. Ladies who are not overpartial to hard and continuous work, and who dread the severe study indispensable if a mastery of painting is to be acquired, will readily take up any new art-work that promises to produce good effects with a small expenditure of trouble. In Silicene, as an imitation of stained glass, we have a method that exactly suits this numerous class of amateurs. On examining it impartially, we can recommend it as being effective and useful as a decoration; but to prevent misunderstanding and disappointment, we must say that it has no pretension to excel, or even to rival, stained glass. At the same time, it is far preferable to the ordinary imitations, for the reason that it is not purely a mechanical process. The labour attendant on producing silicene decorations is certainly extremely small when compared with glass-painting proper. In the latter there is the cut-drawing to prepare and colour, which must be sent to the glass-cutter; then the several pieces have to be arranged in their places on the coloured design, and "stuck up" on a sheet of glass, or else separately painted and shaded, and stained with glass-stain. Again, the glass has to be returned to the workshop to be fired; and, finally, it undergoes the process of leading.

In silicene a single sheet of glass is treated simply as the paper in water-colour drawing, the design being sketched in and the colours laid on. The expense also, it will be readily seen, is much less in the imitation than in the real work, no cutting, no firing, and no leading being necessary. The risk incurred in the transport of the glass to and from the workshop is

avoided, and for those who live in the country this consideration will be of some importance.

In our opinion, a coloured-glass window without "leadings" is an anomaly. They produce a richness of appearance by accentuating portions of the design, thus bringing the more important details into greater prominence and affording relief. These, however, can be imitated in silicene. Beginners in the art of colouring glass are liable to fall into the error of thinking that the more they make their painting like a picture drawn in oil, so much the more valuable will it be. But we must, if we would succeed, adapt our ornamentation to the purpose it is to fulfil; and in the subject now under our consideration it is obvious that "fitness" is not found in making a window look as much like a picture as possible; we should make use of the opportunity afforded us by the space at our disposal to introduce colour and form into the building, be it church or house, without detracting from the unity of the architectural whole.

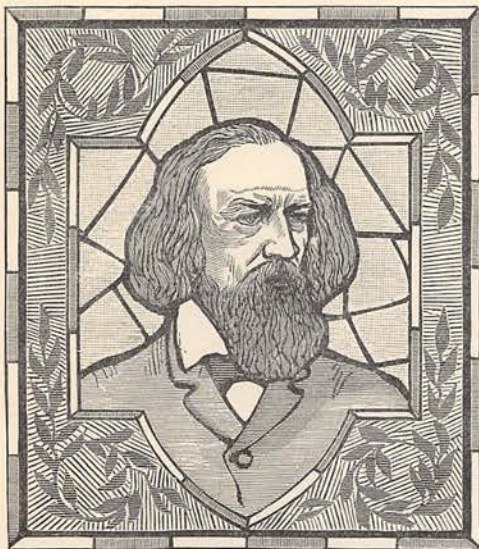
A few words as to the method of working will suffice to acquaint our readers with the whole of the process. The size of the window-frame is first taken, and a sheet of glass is obtained of the same dimensions. Ordinary sheet or plate-glass is used, and if this is washed over with silicene, which is the medium employed for mixing the colours, it will resemble more closely the glass used in old windows. Should a semi-transparent painting be desired, the result will be secured by working on ground glass; for landscapes, it is preferable to clear glass. Again, for staircase windows, fan-lights, and panels for hall doors and for screens, rough wavy glass may be used with advantage. The glass on which the work is to be done must be clean and free from dust, lest specks should appear on the work when finished. The outline of



STAIRCASE WINDOW DESIGN IN SILICINE.

the design should first be drawn on paper : this will be a help to the artist, as he can then trace it off on the glass. The design, picture, photo, or engraving—for anything can be copied in silicine—is laid on a table, and over it the sheet of glass is placed, the outlines being traced in ink. A little ox-gall may be added to the ink should it not flow easily. If leadings are to be imitated on the glass, these outlines may be put in broadly and painted over with silicine. All the colouring is in this case done on the same side, namely, that on which the leadings are already drawn, but should no leadings be required the glass is coloured on the reverse side to that on which the tracing was made, and when the painting is somewhat advanced the ink lines are washed off.

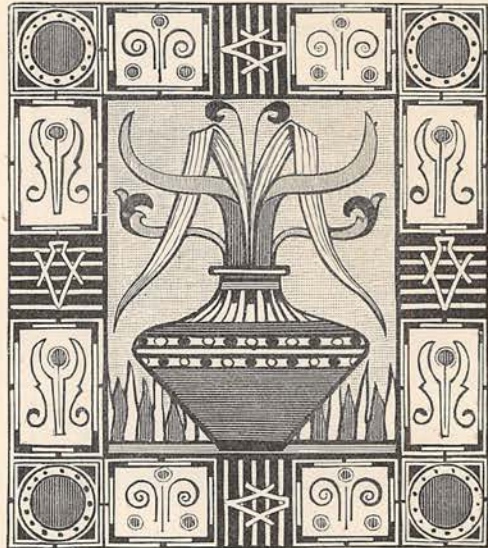
The colours used must be those specially prepared ; it is stated they are quite different from ordinary ones, and no others must be employed with them. They are all translucent, and may be freely mixed together. Silicine is added to all the colours, and it is this that renders them permanent. A china palette is required, and a palette-knife for mixing the colours. Linseed oil will be found useful, as in covering a large surface a drop or two may be mixed with the colours to prevent them drying too quickly. As soon as the tracing is completed, the glass is placed in a sloping position, with a sheet of clean paper laid on the table beneath. The artist will seat himself opposite a window, as he will find he can work best facing the light. A desk or easel is to be obtained at the artists' colourmen's where silicine is sold. As decorators of china will



PORTRAIT FOR LIBRARY WINDOW IN SILICINE.

easily understand, the finger can be used in softening tints, and it is often more effectual than the tools which are made for the purpose. Should any part of

the painting dry dull, a coat of silicine is passed over it, and brilliancy is restored ; this is applied with a soft camel-hair brush. To produce an intense tint, a



DESIGN FOR WINDOW IN SILICINE.

wash of scarlet or yellow, that has been allowed to dry thoroughly, may be painted over with rose-colour. Rose over blue, or blue over yellow, will give strength of tint. Shade colour is also sold ready prepared for use ; it may be varied with the addition of a little blue or rose. Over-painting with the same colour may be also resorted to should a deeper shade be considered needful. Should a wash not appear sufficiently smooth, colour may be stippled on afterwards. High lights can be rendered by the aid of a pointed stick or penknife, and white is imitated by applying silicine thinly with the finger. Corrections are often necessary in the first attempts in a new art-work, and these can be made by first washing out the error with a rag dipped in turpentine, and then re-painting the part. The leadings are improved by covering with gold or silver bronze mixed with silicine. When the painting is completed it must be left to dry thoroughly, after which silicine gloss is washed entirely over the work as a preservative. It must be applied in one wash, and not repeated.

Fixing the painting in its position is simple ; it is reversed and put into the sash, small pieces of wood being placed between the two planes to prevent their contact. Care should be taken that the window-glass is first well cleaned.

Brushes are washed in turpentine if they get clogged, and also whenever work is over for the day. The palette should be warmed by the fire and the colours scraped off ; afterwards it will need washing with turpentine.

