



TERRA-COTTA PAINTING.

By MRS. RANDOLPH-LICHFIELD.

As a material for domestic uses and decorative purposes terra-cotta (a term literally signifying *clay baked*) is of the greatest antiquity.

In many Etruscan tombs vases 2,000 years old have been found, still bright in colour, stainless, and uninjured. These were painted red, buff, yellow, or black, many of them being gilded, their ornamentation consisting generally of representations of domestic scenes, mythological subjects, or flowers and foliage, especially those of the honeysuckle and ivy.

In Egypt and many parts of Sicily and Greece terra-cotta vessels of the early Greek type are frequently found. It was about 150 years B.C. that the art of making these became extinct.

For architectural purposes, however, terra-

cotta was much employed in the seventeenth century, and there were manufactories for it in several parts of Italy.

Many of the English brick mansions of the Tudor period were elaborately adorned with ornaments of this material, and Italian artists, including the celebrated Bramante, were employed in their production.

The manufacture of terra-cotta was revived in England about 1770, by Wedgwood, to whose untiring efforts and patient investigation, aided by the sound scientific principles on which all his experiments were conducted, we owe the rapid and immense improvement made in all varieties of English china and earthenware since that time.

Wedgwood, among other artistic inven-

tions, introduced a terra-cotta which he made to resemble many of the most beautiful stones of the silicious and crystalline species, such as porphyry, granite, Egyptian pebble, &c., and Flaxman, the celebrated sculptor, was employed in their decoration.

In Denmark the manufacture of modern terra-cotta is carried to its highest perfection, and our increased intercourse with that country has, doubtless, been one of the greatest causes of its extended use for decorative purposes.

The discovery in the south of Devon of a vein of fine red clay, of which terra-cotta ware is made, has greatly facilitated the production and improved the quality of that made in England.



The terra-cotta of the present day, the decoration of which forms a branch of art as interesting in its pursuit as it is effective in its results, may be obtained in three colours, black (*mélas*), red, and creamy (*leukós*).

The black may be used for either oil or water-colour painting, but is useless for china colours, as it will not bear firing.

The red and creamy will also receive either oil or water colours, and as they

admit of firing, may be painted with china colours also. The enamelled terra-cotta is prepared for firing, and over glaze china colours are used for its decoration.

The surface of terra-cotta is both easy and pleasant to paint on, and the fact that it may be decorated to the greatest perfection, and with durability, without the tediousness and dangers incidental to firing, makes it a very favourite subject for amateur art. Of all the varieties of terra-cotta, oil colours on black Danish ware is by far the most effective and by far the easiest of accomplishment.

The colours being opaque, every tint tells effectively on the black background, and the finest strokes are as distinctly shown as the broadest.

PAINTING IN OIL COLOURS.

The materials required are: red sable and bristle brushes of various sizes, tubes of oil colours, and *megilp*, or, if preferred, Roberson's medium, to dilute the colours.

The design must be sketched in white, either paint or chalk, taking great care to have it correct and clearly defined. The

painting is treated exactly as if on canvas, the processes of first colouring, shading, &c., being thoroughly similar.

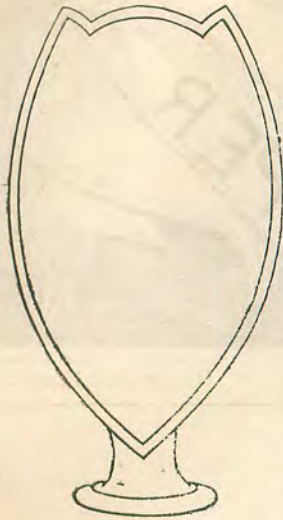
Any inaccuracies or spots of paint may be rubbed off with a piece of cotton wool, so long as they remain moist; but when dry, turpentine will be required to remove them, and must be applied with the greatest care.

Oil painting on red or cream terra-cotta is accomplished in a similar manner and with the same materials.

On the red and cream coloured grounds the subject may be sketched with lead pencil; the marks may be rubbed out, but in this as in all other drawing, it is far better to expend a little time and care in drawing the design in the first instance than to make alterations afterwards.

The oil colours require mixing with a body colour like flake white, Roberson's medium being used for the purpose; they are then painted on rather thickly, but evenly, and allowed to thoroughly dry. All after-painting and finishing is done without the admixture of flake white, the medium still being employed.

with the medium. This process is not necessary with the dark colours, but if you will



try the experiment of laying a *bright* colour on the terra-cotta thus prepared, and a stroke or two of the same *without* the underlayer of Chinese white, you will conclude the few moments' extra work amply repaid by the enhanced brilliancy of the tints. This coat of Chinese white must be laid on evenly and thickly with a flat red sable brush, which must not be too full, great care being taken not to go beyond the limits of the design.

When the white has become perfectly dry, the colours may be painted, moist water colours mixed with the medium being used for the purpose, the details of their shading and finishing being precisely those of ordinary water-colours.

Before the introduction of Chinese white, the whites used for similar purposes were made of lead or zinc, the consequence being their turning black in a few years, or even a shorter time, whether used alone or with other pigments.

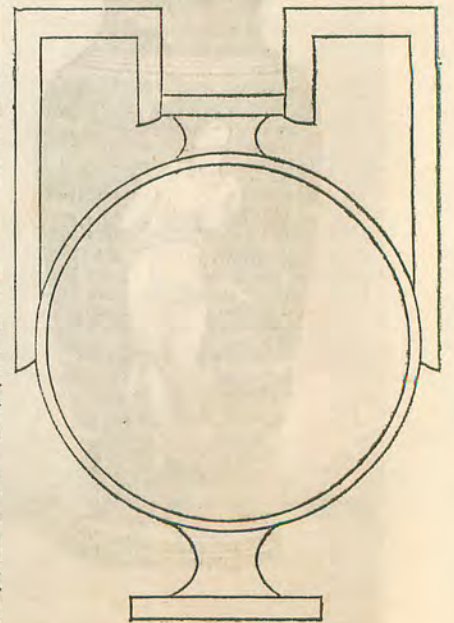
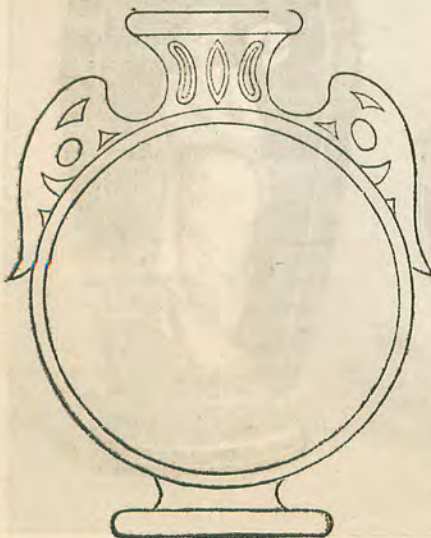
After the painting is perfectly dry, it should have a smooth coat of the medium,

When quite dry the pencilled outlines may be effaced with india-rubber. A slight coat of copal varnish, applied after the painting is thoroughly dry, will bring out the brilliancy of the colours, and enable the terra-cotta to be washed with impunity.

PAINTING WITH WATER-COLOURS.

The application of water-colours to terra-cotta is more tedious and complicated than that of oil, the colours being transparent, necessitate an underground to conceal that formed by the ware. For this purpose it is requisite to coat the design—whether black, red, or cream—with size. This may be obtained of any artists' colourman, or a preparation of lavender balsam, diluted with turpentine, used as a substitute.

After the ground is sized, or prepared with the medium, which must be done smoothly and carefully, and sufficient time has been allowed for it to dry properly, the design must be sketched with Chinese white, and all the portions that are to receive *bright* colours must have a preliminary coat of the Chinese white made into a thin paste



and when this in its turn has become dry, another of varnish may be applied.

The best copal or white spirit varnish is the best for the purpose. I prefer the former; it should be put on very smoothly with a small flat brush, which should be used as dry as possible.

The whole surface may be varnished, but the effect is far preferable if the painting only is thus treated, the bright design showing to the greatest advantage on the dull ground.

If this method is chosen, great care must be taken in applying the varnish, that it should not spread in the least beyond the painting; if this is successfully achieved the design will appear enamelled and slightly raised on the dull surface of the terra-cotta.

PAINTING WITH CHINA COLOURS.

For this purpose the blackened terra-cotta is useless, as it will not bear firing; the red or cream must therefore be selected, and the ground sized or covered with the medium. When this is quite dry the *under glaze* china colours may be applied exactly as they would on biscuit china, taking especial care to have the design perfectly complete before commencing the colouring.

Enamel or *over glaze* colours may be used in precisely the same manner on unenamelled terra-cotta, and the whole article glazed together; but the effect is not so good, as it merely has the appearance of ordinary glazed ware, and loses its distinctive character.

The colours must be used with as dry a brush as possible, and laid on quite smoothly with fine brushes. Where white is employed it must be the white enamel, which must be put on rather thickly.

The painting will require what is technically called a "great fire kiln" for the firing, the ordinary "muffle" heat, which generally suffices for china painting, being inadequate in this case. This, however, is a detail that will be understood by any experienced firm to whom you may entrust your terra-cotta.

ETCHING ON TERRA-COTTA.

This may be done either before or after the terra-cotta is fired; in the former case the ware must be procured in its soft state, and the etching be executed with the unbaked clay, burins of various sizes being used for the work. Correct drawing is absolutely necessary for this work, and some careful practice is needed before the hand learns exactly the decision of touch required; each stroke must be sharp and clear, and deep enough to "take" the clay, great care being required while effecting this to avoid ending the stroke with a little dent or too deep an impression. Should this however, take place, it may be partially rectified by being carefully smoothed over with an etcher's brush.

Mistakes may be treated in the same manner, but it is far better to take extra care to avoid their commission than to be forced to correct them afterward.

Black or brown china colours are employed for any shading that is required, and the whole work must be completed before "firing." As the clay dries in firing, and therefore shrinks slightly, allowance must be made for its doing so in the execution of the design. During the work the terra-cotta must be kept damp, and whenever left it must be kept covered with a damp cloth, or it is *certain* to crumble.

Etching on the *fired* terra-cotta is much pleasanter work, and with a little care will produce very attractive results.

The materials required are etching pens, a bottle of sydertype, instead of ink, and a crayon stick.

The pen must be carefully and firmly held,

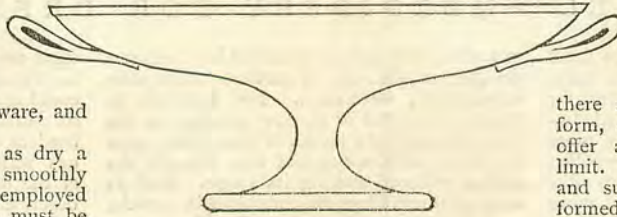
so as to draw decidedly and correctly, taking the precaution to take but little sydertype at a time for fear of making a blot, which would infallibly spoil the etching.

The design is executed in precisely the same manner as adopted for a pen and ink drawing.

If on completion the design should not appear sufficiently dark, the effect may be considerably increased by a little of the crayon stick being gently rubbed over it with cotton wool; this, however, must not be attempted under twenty or thirty minutes after the etching is finished.

Another method of etching on fired terra-cotta is very easy of accomplishment and very effective. Crowquills are the implements required, and are used with lampblack mixed with a little, very little gum. This should be gum Arabic if the etching is to be shiny, and gum tragacanth if preferred dull. Considerable effect may be obtained by putting in any extra depth or mass of colour with a fine brush.

Etching with Indian ink and very fine pens is also very simple work, and a few "high lights" put in with Chinese white greatly enhance the effect. Terra-cotta thus decorated requires either being varnished with



copal or smoothly and quickly covered with gum water; whichever is used will slightly darken the whole surface.

There is an absolute *embarras de richesses* as to designs for etching, the numerous books with beautiful illustration in outline and the sketches and pictures in many of the high class magazines affording ample scope for subjects.

Adrien Bruneau, one of the most celebrated French ceramic painters, designed a most attractive artistic dinner service, the principal subjects being ducks and ducklings, under a variety of more or less pleasant circumstances.

For painting in oil, water, or China colours any subject may be produced on terra-cotta, flowers being particularly attractive, and easier of achievement than landscapes or figures to most amateur artists. I distinctly remember the first specimens of oil painting on terra-cotta that I saw. The painting was so exquisite that I had a difficulty in believing, at a little distance, that the flowers represented were not real, or the most perfect of artificial specimens. In both cases the blackened varnish ware had been employed; one was a "Gloire de Dijon" rose, buds and foliage lightly thrown on a round plaque, about nine inches in diameter; the other, an oval vase, sixteen inches in height, with gracefully curved handles. This had a garland of honeysuckle, apparently thrown carelessly round it, *over* one handle and *beneath* the other.

GILDING ON TERRA-COTTA.

This process is by no means beyond the powers of amateurs, and may be made to add considerably to the effect of many articles in this ware.

The rim of the vase or plaque, the handles, or whatever portion is selected for decoration, must be well rubbed with pumice stone; when made perfectly smooth by this means it must be coated with gilder's size, and when this begins to get "tacky," leaf-gold is applied

with a fine brush, the gold being cut on a cushion specially prepared, a palette knife being used for the purpose. The brush should be passed lightly over the hair, which causes the gold-leaf to adhere to it; the leaf must be laid on very carefully, great care being taken that it does not curl or crease in the application.

A far easier method of gilding than this, and very nearly as effective, is the painting with liquid gold, really prepared for the purpose. This must be mixed with a little refined oil, and laid on smoothly and carefully with a brush. Whichever method may be selected, badger-hair brushes are the best for the purpose.

If you should wish the gold burnished, which adds considerably to its effect, a burnisher made of agate will be required. When the gold becomes dirty or tarnished, as it may from being exposed to the gas, or a variety of other causes, it can be cleaned with whitelead or acetic acid, *i.e.*, white wine vinegar.

The three beautiful vases shown in the illustration on p. 225 are the copyright property of Messrs. Howell, James and Co., by whom they have been exhibited.

The outline illustrations will give some idea of the variety of forms in which terra-cotta ware is made. Besides numerous styles of tazzas, vases, &c., used for decorative purposes, there are plaques of every style, size, and form, and to the designs for which these offer a foundation there is practically no limit. The plaques may be let into cabinets and sunk in the centre of small tables, or formed into *jardinières* by being framed in wood. Set into shield-shaped pieces of wood, covered with velvet, they make remarkably attractive wall ornaments.

I saw a few days ago a very elegant arrangement of terra-cotta plaques over a mantelpiece. The mantelpiece proper was covered with dark green velvet, and above this was a shelf to correspond, attached to a shaped piece of wood, forming a back, and fastened to the wall; let into this frame were fine circular plaques of terra-cotta, the centre one large, the others decreasing in size. The paintings were in oil on the blackened ware, and the designs flowers. The whole effect was very uncommon and so thoroughly artistic that, had my readers seen it themselves instead of merely reading my weak description of its attractions, I am sure they would at the very first opportunity have sought to produce a similar effect by putting into practice the few directions for terra-cotta painting I have offered for their assistance.

TEACHING TRICKS TO CLEVER CATS.

To make a cat a good trickster you must love her, and take an interest in her little performances, and you will be surprised at the number of tricks she will learn. Without reference to the accomplishments of performing cats, who require a special education, we may enumerate just a few of the many simple tricks which you may teach any cat of ordinary brain calibre. A cat may be taught to beg like a dog; to embrace you; to pat your nose or your neighbour's nose when told (N.B.—It is perhaps as well it should always be your neighbour's nose); to down charge; to watch by a mouse's hole; to stand in a corner on her hind legs; to move rhythmically to music; to leap six or eight feet through a hoop, or over your head; to feign sleep; to feign death; to open or shut a door, and to ring the bell.