time immemorial, and is especially adapted for making concrete where a large proportion of foreign substances is introduced. As an artificial stone, although it hardens on exposure, its composition is too irregular to justify a very extended use. In the process of setting, the lime first mixes with water and becomes hydrate of lime and is then rapidly converted into silicate of lime, adhering strongly in thin films, to itself and to foreign bodies with which it is in contact.

The siliceous stone of Mr. Ransome consists of sand and foreign substances, worked up into a paste with the fluid silicate of soda. If left to dry in the air it would fall to powder, but being exposed to a high heat in a kiln a chemical action takes place. The alkali of the silicate of soda "combines with an additional quantity of silica, supplied by the sand, &c., with which it is incorporated, and becomes converted into an insoluble glass, firmly agglutinating all the various particles together into a solid, compact substance." No sensible contraction takes place in burning, and cracks rarely occur.

The resistance to weather offered by these three kinds of artificial stone may be thus stated:—1. Terra cotta, contracting irregularly in the kiln, is subject to cracks and flaws, into which water penetrating and expanding during frost, a peeling and splitting of the material naturally follow. It is almost certain, from the nature of the case, that delicate and ornamental work should be more liable to such injury than straight work and plain surfaces. 2. Cement, owing to the want of homogeneity in the raw material, is also very subject to flaws and cracks, and is injured by damp and frost like terra cotta. Both terra cotta and cement require painting in London and elsewhere. 3. The siliceous stone is rarely flawed in the kiln, but even if it is, the stone does not crack, or the surface peel by exposure to damp and frost, owing to the nature of the cement, which is, in fact, glass. It is also worthy of remark, that this material obtains its greatest hardness before it leaves the kiln, whereas cement gradually hardens, and continues to harden for many years if it be not destroyed before the induration is sufficiently advanced.

During experiments made in the laboratory on various methods suggested for preserving stone, by a section of the committee recently appointed by the Board of Works in reference to the Palace at Westminster, Dr. Hoffman, Dr. Frankland, Mr. Abel, and myself, being members of this sub-committee, a very remarkable material was submitted by Mr. Ransome and experimented on to some extent.

Dr. Frankland has since reported on this material. Its discovery arose out of the application of Mr. Ransome's method of preserving stone by effecting a deposit of silicate of lime within the substance of absorbent stones:—Mr. Ransome saturating the surface with a solution of silicate of soda, and then applying a solution of chloride of calcium, thus producing a rapid double decomposition, leaving an insoluble silicate of lime within the stone, and a soluble chloride of sodium (or common salt), which could afterwards be removed by washing. To prove that by this process a coating of hard silicate of lime was actually formed and deposited, as according to his theory it must be, Mr. Ransome made small blocks of various forms, in moulds, by mixing loose sand with the fluid silicate of soda, and then dipping the mould into the chloride of calcium. To the surprise probably at first of Mr. Ransome himself, but certainly of the chemists of the sub-committee, who performed the experiment in the absence of the inventor, there came out almost instanteously a perfectly compact, hard, and, to all appearance, a perfectly durable solid. In such solids, at least, there seems to be no element of destruction.

It was evident that such a result could not be without consequences. So far as it bore upon the inquiry of the committee, it is alluded to in their published report. Many considerations connected with the nature and condition of natural stones liable to destruction by weathering, prevent an absolute decision without much previous experience. Mr. Ransome, however, immediately patented his "concrete stone," and as an artificial stone it deserves to be well known and thoroughly considered. It promises, indeed, to combine the advantages, and seems to show none of the disadvantages, of other artificial stones. It is cheap, being made of almost any rubbish on the spot where it is required, by the aid of materials neither costly nor difficult to convey. It is made with rapidity, and is ready for use without drying or burning. It hardly requires even a temporary shed for the purposes of manufacture, and may be made of any size, and moulded into any form. So far as can be detected, it is subject to no injury from weather, and becomes, in fact, if made with sand, a true sandstone, cemented by silicate of lime, than which there is no better natural material. No doubt it will be necessary to watch carefully for a few years the behaviour of a silicate of lime thus deposited; but if it endure that test, there can be no doubt that it will then improve by time, increased age only hardening all known silicates of lime, especially those formed from lime used as mortar or cement.

In the application of this subject to the preservation of stone, there seems a probability that some valuable result will follow from the suggestion of Mr. Ransome, to effect the deposit of an insoluble silicate within the pores of an absorbent stone by double decomposition. The objection, strongly felt, that the material thus deposited would probably be in the form of unconnected grains, rather than a cementing film, seems answered by the formation of a stone so solid as the specimens show; and although it is unlikely that any contrivance can render absolutely permanent a stone that has once advanced far in decay, it will be a great step gained if poor and doubtful stones can be rendered almost indestructible before being placed in a building and exposed to danger.

So far as artificial stone is concerned, Mr. Ransome's material, if it really shows no unexpected weakness, will answer all requirements. It has been tried on a somewhat large scale in the bed of a steam engine, weighing two tons, in the International Exhibition, and again in the new stations recently erected for the Metropolitan Railway. Smaller specimens are very satisfactory. It seems to combine cheapness with durability and resistance to weathering to an extent hitherto unknown.