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H A N D - B O O K

FOR THE

PRESERVATION OF PICTURES;

CONTAINING PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

FOR

CLEANING, LINING, REPAIRING, AND RESTORING
OIL PAINTINGS,

WITH REMARKS

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WORKS OF ART IN HOUSES AND GALLERIES,
THEIR CARE AND PRESERVATION.

B Y H E N R Y M O G F O R D .

NINTH EDITION.



Ars probat artificem.

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P A R T I.

THE DISTRIBUTION AND CARE OF WORKS OF ART.

WITHIN the last half century the Fine Arts have become universally recognised among us, as a source of intellectual gratification and instruction. In all the habitations of educated persons, some of its productions are certain to be found, and are usually prized as the type of taste in the possessor. With somewhat of this feeling, modestly repressed, and the desire of embellishing the walls of apartments beyond their former blankness of mere panneling, or poorly-designed paper-hangings, the acquisition of oil paintings, water-colour drawings and engravings, has largely ensued for the purpose. A few remarks upon their adaptation for enjoyment, or decoration, may not be unworthy the attention

of many persons; and perhaps still more so, some instruction relative to the best means of preserving these prized objects from deterioration or decay.

Pictures, drawings, and prints, unquestionably enjoy their brightest lustre and highest perfection at the first moment of production. Every artist, either of the greatest talent or of lesser ability, endeavours to complete his work with all the resources of his skill, seeking for present approbation, and certainly not trusting to organic changes, in the lapse of years, to establish his reputation. The very nature of the materials which form the elements of works of art, are, more or less, subject to a gradual decay, particularly in our northern clime. Nearly all the pigments known and employed by artists are liable to lose their primitive hues, and become either less lustrous, dark, or changed. The wood and canvas upon which pictures are painted, suffer decay; desiccation and insect ravages lead to the remote destruction of panel, the fibres of the threads of canvas lose all tenacity; and paper from a snowy whiteness becomes an unpleasant drab colour, besides being frequently reduced to a perfect rottenness by the insidious agency of damp.

A recent official inquiry has taken place on the subject of the pictures in the National Gallery—their altered condition during a few past years, and upon their removal to a less-destroying locality. The result of this inquiry makes it evident that in London and large towns, some precautions are of absolute necessity; nor are coun-

try abodes without the continuous agency of mischief, although of another and slower kind. The Parliamentary Committee have, however, not arrived at any further conclusion, than that some means are indispensable for further protection of the great works of art belonging to the nation.

Now all persons have the same desire to preserve their own works of art, even those who are indifferent to the charms of art, for the sake of its pecuniary worth as property ; and almost every person has some ideas about the means of preserving their works, generally derivable from common sense or practical notions, referable to the usual care taken of other household objects, but not always applicable to pictures.

In offering the succeeding observations on this subject, the writer had the wish to bring together the result of some experience on his part, aided by judicious remarks made by others, with which he has been favoured in furtherance of this Essay ; in the confident hope it may be acceptable and useful to many readers, by at least stimulating attention to the best means of prolonging the preservation of pictorial art, for our own enjoyment and instruction, as well as for those of our posterity.

The changes of temperature in our climate ; smoke from coal fires, lamps, and candles ; rooms heated by crowds of company ; dust actively stirred thereby ; vapours from the dinner and tea-table ; the presence of