

**ADVICE TO PROPRIETORS, ON THE CARE  
OF VALUABLE PICTURES PAINTED IN OIL,  
WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESERVING,  
CLEANING, AND RESTORING THEM,  
WHEN DAMAGED OR DECAYED**

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Advice to proprietors, on the care of valuable pictures painted in oil, with instructions for preserving, cleaning, and restoring them, when damaged or decayed by Various

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# **VARIOUS**

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CARE OF VALUABLE PICTURES  
PAINTED IN OIL,  
WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
PRESERVING, CLEANING, AND RESTORING THEM,  
WHEN DAMAGED OR DECAYED.  
BY AN ARTIST.

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INDOCTI DISCANT, ET AMENŒ MEMINISSE FERUNT.

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WYCOMBE, E. KING.  
1835.

358.

## ADVICE, &c.

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"Or he may turn Picture cleaner, and help  
time to destroy excellences which he cannot  
rival."

OPIN'S LECTURES.

THE uniform progress of civilized life is from things that are indispensably necessary; to those which may be considered as mere accommodations, from accommodations, to embellishments and ornaments; but as these embellishments are often of a perishable nature, and in the course of time require renovating, the following brief instructions are submitted to those who undertake the delicate and sometimes difficult operation of cleaning, preserving, and restoring Oil Paintings.

The ingenious author of the work entitled Chromatography, or a treatise on

Colours used in Painting, &c. remarks, "that the diseases and disorders of Pictures are almost as numerous as those of animal nature, and dependent on innumerable accidental circumstances; hence Picture cleaning has become a mystery, in which all the quackery of art has been long and profitably employed, and in which every practitioner has his favorite nostrum for doctoring, which too often denotes destroying, under the pretence of restoring and preserving. The restoration of disfigured and decayed works of art is nevertheless next in importance to their production; and though it chiefly relates to the colouring of Pictures, it requires on the part of the doctor, if we may so say, a knowledge of their entire anatomy and constitution.

This medication of Pictures is then no mean subject of art, but is, when divested of quackery and fraud, as honourable in its

bearing as any other form of healing art, and to be well qualified for its practice, requires a thorough education and knowledge in everything that relates to the practice of Painting, or the production of a Picture, but more particularly to its chemical constitution and colouring. As however a Picture has no natural and little of a regular constitution, it will be difficult to give general rules, and utterly impossible to prescribe universal remedies for cleaning and restoring Pictures, injured by time and ill-usage; we will therefore briefly record such methods and means, as have been successfully employed in cleaning and restoring in particular cases, with such cautions as seem necessary to prevent their misapplication, confining our remarks to Oil Paintings in particular.

These are subject to deterioration and disfigurement simply by dirt,—by the fai-



lure of their grounds,—by the obscuration and discolourment of vehicles and varnishes,—by the fading and changing of colours,—by the cracking of the body, ground, and surface,—by damp, mildew, foul air,—and by mechanical violence,—by *injudicious cleaning\* and painting on*,—among a variety of other natural and accidental causes of injury and decay.

The first thing necessary to be done in cleaning and restoring is, to bring the Picture to its original plane and even surface, by stretching, or if sufficiently injured to require it, by lining, which with the transferring of Pictures to new canvasses, is an

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\*There are many instances of fine Pictures having been spoilt by *inexperienced Picture cleaners*, we subjoin the following, noticed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the course of his journey to Flanders and Holland, with Mr. Metcalfe.—*Reynolds's Works*, vol. ii. p. 255.

operation admirably well performed in London by experienced hands. In cases of simple dirt, washing with a sponge or soft leather and water is sufficient, with subsequent rubbing of a silk handkerchief; which latter occasionally used is eminently preservative of a Painting.

After restoring the surface to its level, and washing, the next essential in cleaning is to remove the varnish, or covering by which the Picture is obscured; and this in the case of simple varnishes is usually done either by friction or solution, or by chemical

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*St. Michael's Church, Ghent.*

In this Church *is*, or rather *was*, the famous Crucifixion of Vandyck; for it is almost *destroyed by cleaning*. It is well known by the fine print of Bolswert, and it appears by what remains, to have been one of his most capital works.

*Alost St. Martin, Ghent.*

St. Rock interceding with Christ for the diseased of the plague, by Rubens.

and mechanical means united, when the varnish is combined, as commonly happens, with oils and a variety of foulness.

In removing varnish by friction, if it be a soft varnish, such as that of mastic, the simple rubbing of the finger ends, with or without water may be found sufficient: a portion of the resin attaches itself to the fingers, and by continual rubbing removes the varnish. If it be a hard varnish, such as that of copal, which is to be removed, friction with sea or river sand, the particles of which have a rotundity that pre-

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The composition is upon the same plan as that of St. Bavon, at Ghent. The Picture is divided into two parts; the Saint and Christ are represented in the upper part, and the effects of the plague in the lower part of the Picture.

In this piece the gray is rather predominant, and the figures have not that union with their ground, which is generally so admirable in the works of Rubens. I suspect it has been in some *Picture*