

THE SCIENCE OF PAINTING

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The Science of Painting by J. G. Vibert

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J. G. VIBERT

**THE SCIENCE
OF PAINTING**

“ THE
SCIENCE OF PAINTING. ”

BY
J. G. VIBERT.

*A TRANSLATION
FROM THE EIGHTH EDITION, REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.*

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FAS Fund

Books are dedicated to esteemed colleagues, to admired celebrities, or to illustrious individuals, whose patronage the author thus hopes to obtain.

This book would be dedicated to the Institute of France, were such a dedication permitted to any book.

TO THE READER.

THE author, at the conclusion of the course of public lectures which he gave at the "School of Fine Arts," has willingly consented, at the request of many of his hearers, to publish his lectures in this book, which he has now the honour of placing before you.

Having no pretension to give to his colleagues lessons, or even advice, except for the preservation of their works, the author will pass over all questions of beauty of drawing, of anatomy, of perspective and of composition, which form part of the *art* of painting, but which have no influence on its durability; he will only take up the practical part, or what might be vulgarly called the wire-pulling department. At the most he will only make some scientific digressions, necessary because certain effects cannot be properly understood unless their causes are known.

This book, the fruit of thirty years of study and experience, is the most serious and honest work which has been written on the subject. At least the author thinks so; and he must say so, for should he through excess of modesty say anything else, he would not be believed.

Notwithstanding the qualities which its author believes it to possess, will this book have the results which he expects from it?

Will it cause painters to adopt a more rational method? May we hope, thanks to it, to see the masterpieces of the future preserve their brilliancy and freshness?

Of that the author is not quite sure. Not daring to feel certain of great success, he will feel himself rewarded for his efforts if his book finds one reader from beginning to end; and you as that possible reader he now salutes.

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SCIENCE OF PAINTING.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROCESS OF PAINTING AT DIFFERENT PERIODS.

As soon as men collected together anywhere to live as a society, they had a religion and an art, whose first manifestation has always been painting.

The primitive process employed was everywhere the same. It still exists in all its simplicity with some savage tribes who use it to paint their idols, their utensils, their firearms, and even the bodies of their warriors. This process, limited to the use of argillaceous earths, naturally coloured by the presence of metallic oxides, or to dyes obtained from the decoction and the sap of certain plants, consists in mixing earth with water to form a coloured paste, and then by means of a little stick, or merely with the finger, spreading it over the object to be decorated. This is a very simple method!

And yet, although this first process is so very elementary, it contains the germ of all the others; and we are about to see that the numerous colouring-matters placed to-day by nature and science at the disposal of painters are nearly all combinations of three elementary substances—clay, metallic salts, and vegetable dyes.