

THE FRENCH POLISHER'S HANDBOOK

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A
PRACTICAL
BOOK
BY A
PRACTICAL
MAN



PERCIVAL MARSHALL & CO. LONDON

The
French Polisher's
Handbook

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The
**French Polisher's
Handbook**

With a Section on
GILDING AND BRONZING

BY
"A PRACTICAL MAN"

London

PERCIVAL MARSHALL & CO.
66, Farringdon Street, E.G. 4

INTRODUCTION

As materials and tools are the first things the mechanic looks for when he commences work, I shall begin my book by giving the public an accumulation of trade recipes. A glance at the contents (page 6) of this book will enable you to prepare the stains and polishes, etc., required for the job in hand, while an alphabetically arranged index will be found at the end of this work for further reference. As almost every human being takes an interest in the contents of his home, I trust that my humble efforts "to make things look a little brighter than they are," by handing over to the public the experiences I have gained as a practical French Polisher at home and abroad, will prove of some help to those engaged in the trade, and also to those who wish to do some useful work at home.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Recipes for Making Various Stains	7 - 16
Grain Fillers.....	19 - 23
French Polishes	30-34
White Transparent Polish	31
Varnishes.....	20
Glace.....	47
Wax Polish	37 - 38
Oil Polish	20
Lacquers.....	95 - 96
Recipes for Fumigating Woods	12
Bleaching Woods.....	16
Revivers	75
Use of Various Stains	17
Linseed Oil	18, 26, 48
How to Apply the Fillers.....	19 - 23
Polish	32 - 40
Methylated Spirits.....	31 - 35
Glace.....	47
Varnish.....	20 - 46
Lacquers	95 - 96
Revivers	75 - 76
Pumice Stone	22
Dulling the Polished Surface	35
Dry Shining.....	36
German Piano Finish	79 - 80
Wax Polishing	37
Use of Rubbers and Brushes.....	23 - 30
How to Polish in the Lathe	81
Carved Woodwork.....	21
Repolish Shop Fronts.....	73
Old Furniture	71
Polish Coffins	82
Fretwork.....	67
Poker Work.....	66
Wax Polish Floors	38
Re-gild Picture Frames	88

RECIPES FOR MAKING VARIOUS STAINS

IN French Polishing, two kinds of stains are used. The first is a water stain, the second a spirit stain. Those who make use of a water stain soon find out that, shortly after the stain has been applied, the grain of the wood commences to rise. The roughness of the grain can easily be cut down with No. 1 or No. 0 glass paper, and the glass paper can be used while the wood is still damp; if you have made use of the glass paper too freely and taken too much of the stain off, then you can touch up those bare places with the same stain you have used before. On very coarse-grained woods, the polisher mixes some glue size with his stain, so as to fill in the pores of the wood quicker. This stain is generally laid on with a bristle brush. Though water stains have their merits, and are far easier to apply than a spirit stain, a very good result can be obtained by the use of a spirit stain carefully laid on the wood.

Mahogany Stains

Cheap woods such as Pine, Deal, Spruce, etc., may be stained Mahogany, by dissolving 1/2 oz. Bismarck Brown with 1 pint of Methylated Spirit. This stain may be applied with a bristle brush, but remember that a spirit stain dries much quicker than a water stain, and if you stain one part first and leave the job half undone, then you cannot so

easily restart at the same place where you left off without making part of the wood a little darker. If you try this on a piece of waste wood, and stain part of it first and let it dry for a few minutes, then, by starting again where you left off, you can distinctly notice that in some places you have caught the wood twice with the stain you have been using, making it look patchy, for every time you touch the wood with a spirit stain, it will become a little darker in colour; that is why you should always try and finish a staining job while you are at it, and not piecemeal. It is also better when using a spirit stain to apply the stain in the direction of the grain of the wood. A water stain you can lay on with a sponge or a piece of rag in any way, but towards the finishing off you should rub your rag in the direction of the grain. Before you start to stain any job, always try the deepness of the stain you have been making on a piece of waste wood similar to, the job in hand; and when you are trying a spirit stain, notice if you give the wood the desired shade with the first or second application of the brush containing the stain. This is very important, for if you touch the wood twice with a spirit stain you will distinctly notice that by the second application of the brush you have been making the wood a lot darker than it was at first.

When the stain you are using is too strong in colour, then you can weaken the same by adding more spirits if it is a spirit stain, or water if it is a water stain. If the Bismarck stain you have been making is of a too fiery red, then the same may be

French chalk. As French chalk will cause a lot of dust, it should be used sparingly, or else the dancers will grumble about the dust rising when the floor is being used. Another preparation for sprinkling ballroom floors is made of a strong solution of Carbonate of Soda in which a lump of Bees' Wax has been boiled. The remarks I made as to a wax-polished surface being very sensitive to any liquid that is spilt on it will apply to a wax-polished floor in the same way, and any stain thus made can be removed in the way mentioned in the subject, Wax Polishing. Sometimes a floor that has been wax polished is varnished over to protect it against water, etc. A Copal Varnish is best for that purpose, and may be made by boiling 6 oz. Gum Copal in 1/2 pint Raw Linseed Oil. When the Gum is dissolved, then take it away from the fire and add about 3/4 pint Turpentine ; allow to cool and apply with a soft brush.

Bodying -In

Bodying-in or laying on the first coat of French Polish is one of the most essential things done in the French Polishing process. Always dust your work first before applying any polish to the work. Take a soft, clean rubber and wet the same moderately with the French Polish to be used. As the surface to be polished has, as a rule, been oiled first, the wood is sufficiently greasy to apply the first few rubbers of polish without the use of any Linseed Oil. You will always build up a nicer surface of polish by using the Linseed Oil very sparingly, just enough to lubricate your rubber.

When you have applied the polish to the rubber and covered the rubber up with a soft piece of rag, and twisted the rag round the rubber so that the top surface of the rubber is perfectly smooth, then start to apply the polish to the surface in a circular motion just as if you were making the figure o, rubbing one o into the other o. You may not see very much result from the first few rubbers of polish applied in this manner, but remember that when you have put polish on your rubber, it is best to work out the greatest portion of the polish that is in the rubber into the wood before applying fresh polish to the rubber. I admit that this will take a little longer to build up a good surface, but a far nicer result is to be got by bodying up with a half-wet rubber than to start to polish with a rubber that is soaking wet with polish. The corners, the edges, the mouldings and carvings should always be polished more often than the centre part of the surface you are polishing, as you can always see if the centre part of the surface is polished well, but some of the other parts mentioned are often neglected. You can always tell when looking on the cover of your rubber when you are polishing if any Linseed Oil is wanted to aid you in the bodying-up process, for if there is some oil left on the surface of the wood when you start polishing, then the cover of your rubber will look greasy and shining when you look at it after having applied the first few rubbers of polish to the surface of the wood. When the cover of your rubber begins to look clean, then you can start to use a few spots of Raw Linseed Oil to the surface of the wood to aid

Before starting my next subject, it may be just as well to remind those who are learning to French Polish that before any wood is bodied up with the rubber or the brush, it has to be prepared before the polish is applied to the wood. First it is stained, then oiled over so as to draw the grain or figure of the wood. After it has been oiled, the pores of the wood are filled in with a filler so as to save an excessive absorption of the polish. After filling in, the work is rubbed clean and slightly oiled over so as to hide any of the whiting used in the filling-in process, and then the bodying up commences as described in the previous pages.

Second Coat

When the French Polisher takes the work that has been bodied up and left to harden in hand again to put on the second coat of polish, he will notice that the first coat of polish he has applied to the wood has sunk partly into the wood. Before you start using polish, first dust the work with a soft clean duster, then take a piece of worn-out glass paper and apply one or two spots of Linseed Oil on the surface of the glass paper to be used. Now go gently over the polished surface with the glass paper and remove any unevenness you may find there, as it is essential in French Polishing that the polish you are laying on to the surface of the wood should be spread evenly on the wood. After you have smoothed the surface down with the piece of used glass paper, dust the surface over again and start to use a half-wet rubber of polish. To spread the polish you are putting on your rubber

ready for spiriting out. The moulded, carved, and turned work belonging to the job in hand should be smoothed down with No. 0 glass paper, and if possible polished up with rubbers of half-and-half; but if it is too difficult to work the rubber into the corners or crevices, then the same may be coated over again with equal parts of spirit varnish and polish laid on evenly with the camel-hair brush. After this is done and left for one hour to harden, some polishers touch those parts up with a glaze rubber before the same are spirited out. On fiat surfaces, a thinner polish is used when the second coat of polish is laid on than the polish used in the bodying-up process, and if the same polish is used when the second coat of polish is applied, then the polish is always thinned out by the aid of Methylated Spirits on the rubber. A judicious application of thin rubbers of polish in the second coating of the wood will bring on that rich, evenly distributed layer of polish always seen on an expensive piece of furniture that has been polished in a proper manner. A similar gloss may be obtained in the bodying-up process, but as a thin polish sinks quicker into the wood than a thicker polish, it can be easily understood that the first gloss laid on with thin polish will soon fade away as the polish sinks in the wood. The same thing will happen when too much oil has been used in the polishing process, and besides that, the work will start sweating and feel clammy, as the Linseed Oil used in the polishing process does not form any part of the French Polish in itself, but is only used as a lubricant for the rubber, so that the shellac and the

INDEX

- Alkanet Oil, use of, 18.
Alkanet spirit, use of, 64.
Alum, use of, 19.
American Ink, use of, 13.
Ammonia, Liquid, use of, 12.
Antimony, Butter of, 76.
- Bath Brick, use of, 76.
Beaumontage, to make, 43.
Bedstead, Lacquer for Brass,
33.
Bedstead Polishing, 37.
Beeswax Polish, to make, 37.
Benzoin Gum, 47.
Bismarck Brown, 7.
Black, to stain, 14.
Black Polish, 33.
Black Polish, to dull, 35.
Black Polishing, to finish, 34.
Bleaching, 16.
Blending of Colours,
see Toning, 59.
Blisters in Veneer, to remove, 78.
- Bodying-up with the Brush, 28.
- Bodying-up with the Rubber,
40, 77.
- Brunswick Black, use of, 12.
Brushes, 28.
Brush Polishes, 28.
Brush Polishing, 28.
Burnt Sienna, use of, 9.
- Camwood, or Red Sanders,
use of, 9.
Carved Woodwork, to polish,
21.
Chalk, see French Chalk, 40.
Chilling of Polish, cause and
prevention, 34.
- Chippendaie Polish, 12.
Chippendale Stain, 12.
Coffin Polishing, 82.
Covers for Rubbers, 23.
Cutting down the Grain, 7.
- Dry Shining, 36.
Dulling Polished Surfaces, 35
- Ebonizing or Black Polishing, 95.
- Egg Shell Finish, 35.
Emery Powder, use of, 35.
- Fillers for the grain of the
wood, 19.
Finishing with Glace, 47.
Finishing with Methylated
Spirits, 56.
Fittings for Shops, to polish, 75.
- Floor Polishing, 38.
French Chalk for sprinkling
floors, 40.
Fretwork, How to Polish, 67.
Fretwork, How to Stain, 67.
Fretwork, How to Varnish, 68.
- Fumigating, 12.
- Garnet Shellac, use of, 34.
German Finish, 79.
Gilding and Re-gilding, 88.
Glace, to make, 47.
Glass Cutting, 94.
Glass Paper, use of, 36.
Grain Fillers, use of, 19.
Green Copperas or Sulphate
of Iron, 13.
Gum Arabic, 30.
Gum Beozoin, use of, 47.

-
-
- Gum Copal, use of, 30.
Gum Mastic, use of, 31.
Gum Sandarach, 31.
- Hard Stopping, 43.
- Inlaid Work, How to Polish, 62.
- Lacquers for Brasswork, 95.
Lathe Polishing for Turned Woods, 80.
Levelling Polished Surfaces, 42.
Linseed Oil, use of, 42.
Logwood Chips, use of, 13.
- Mahogany Filler, 19.
Mahogany Finish on cheap woods, 46.
Mahogany Polish, 30.
Mahogany Stain, 7.
Marqueterie Polish, 64.
- Naphtha use of, 34.
Nut Galls, use of, 10.
- Oak, Filler for, 19.
Oak, to Fumigate, 12.
Oak, to Imitate Old, 12.
Oak Polishing, 53.
Oak Stain, 11.
Oil Polishing, 19.
Organ Polishing, 77.
Oxalic Acid, use of, 16.
Ox Gall, use of, 58.
- Painted Wood, to Polish, 86.
Pianos, to Re-polish, 77.
Piano Oil (American) 80.
Pine Wood, to Polish, 7
Plaster of Paris, use of, 19.
Poker Work, 66.
Polish, to make French Polish, 30.
Polish, Black, 33.
Polish, Brown, 32.
Polish, Red, 32.
- Polish, Walnut, to make, 33.
Polish, White, to make, 31.
Polish, Yellow, to make, 32.
Potash, American, use of, 10.
Potash, Bichromate of, use of, 10.
Potash, Permanganate of, use, 11
Pounce Bag, 22.
Protecting Inlaid Work before staining, 62.
Pumice Powder, use of, 22.
Pumice Stone, 22.
Putty for Stopping, 44.
- Raising of the Grain, 7.
Red Oil, 18.
Red Polish, use of, 13.
Red Sanders, or Camwood, 9.
Red Stains, 7.
Re-gilding, 88.
Removing Old Polish, 73.
Removing Stains, 16.
Re-polishing Old Furniture, 71.
Resin, 20.
Resin Varnish, 20.
Reviver for Gilded Woods, 75.
Reviver for Polished Woods, 75.
- Rose Pink, use of, 19.
Rosewood, to Polish, 33.
Rosewood Stain, 13.
Rubber Marks (removing), 56
Rubbbers, Material for making, 23.
Rubbbers in use for Oil Polishing, 19.
Rubbbers in use for Polishing, 23.
- Rubbbers in use for Spiriting off, 55.
Russian Tallow, use of, 20
- Satin Walnut Stain, 11.
Second Coating of Polish, 48.
Shellac, 30.
Sheraton, to Polish, 14.
Shop Fixtures, to Polish, 73.

- Shop Fronts, to Renovate, 73.
Sienna, use of Raw, 9.
Soda, use of, 10.
Soda, Carbonate of, use of, 40.
Sperm Wax, 39.
Spirit Black, use of, 33.
Spirit Varnish, 45.
Spirits, Methylated, 30.
Spiriting off, 55.
Stain, use of, 17.
Stain, Black, 14.
Stain, Chippendale, 12.
Stain, Cyprus, 15.
Stain, Mahogany, 7.
Stain, Oak, 11.
Stain, Rosewood, 13.
Stain, Satin Walnut, 11.
Stain, Sheraton, 14.
Stain, Walnut, 10.
Stopping-out Wax or Putty, 44.
Stripping off Old Polish, 73.
Substitute for Walnut Stains, 10.
Swab for Spiriting off, 58.
Table Tops, to Polish, 18.
Temperature for Polishing, 34.
Test for Gold Leaf, 94.
Toning or Colour Blending, 59.
Transfers, use of, 64.
Turned Woodwork, to Polish, 80.
Turpentine, use of, 18, 37.
Van Dyck Brown, use of, 10.
Varnish, Blooming of, 97.
Varnish, use of Oil Varnish, 45.
Violins, Polishing, 52.
Wax Polishing, 37.
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