

PAINT GUARANTEES

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PAINT Guarantees

By
G. B. HICKEL

Author of "A Paint Guarantee for Paint Men"

"The Paint Professional"

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Paint Guarantees

By
G. B. HECKEL
Author of "A Palat Catchism for Paint Men;"
"Why Paint Peels," etc., etc.



This booklet is the third of a series by the author;
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"A responsible name on a
sealed can is everywhere the
modern guarantee of quality"

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G. B. Hechel, Secretary
Bureau of Promotion and Development

FOREWORD.

The likening of men to sheep is as old as literature. A very few men in any age or in any calling are originators or leaders: the rest of us are imitators or followers.

If the genius who originally conceived the idea of "taking everything in sight" by guaranteeing his paint for a period of years had resolutely strangled his "happy thought" at birth, he would have been a benefactor of the entire trade and paint manufacturers yet unborn might have blessed his memory.

But the paint guarantee is with us—it has grown into the Frankenstein of an unblushing twenty years' guarantee, and it must be reckoned with until the very absurdity of its swollen pretensions gets it laughed out of court.

It is the father of a whole brood of bad practices,—the Mephistopheles of the paint trade, suggesting fraud, collusion, suppression of the truth, downright lying. It is for the paint dealer in every instance to "put it to its purgation," scan its

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credentials, and insist upon the strict letter of the bargain. In every case where the guarantee is invoked, it is his duty to demand with old Shylock, "Is it so nominated in the bond?"

The consumer to whom paint is given to repaint a defective job under the guarantee, supposing his complaint to be based on honest ignorance, is not placated by the concession. He is confirmed in his belief that he was defrauded in the first place. Hence the necessity of showing him absolutely and undeniably that he has no claim under the most liberal interpretation of the guarantee, before the concession, if any, is granted.

In this way and in this way only can the dealer cut at the root of this evil and convince the paint consuming public of the primary-school truth that good paint made by a reputable manufacturer is neither fortified nor improved by a guarantee.

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THE LIMIT OF
ABSURDITY

"We guarantee our paint to wear at least five years in any climate and on any surface—galvanized iron, steel, cement or wood, whether the wood be old or new, sound or rotten—no matter what the character or condition of the surface; and we also guarantee that it will look better at the end of ten years than any other paint at the end of three years. We guarantee it to be better than any other paint at any price, to cover twice the surface and to last twice as long as any other paint."

This is the "paint guarantee," pushed to the limit of absurdity.

EXPERT
GUESSING

Anyone who can guess what will happen to a coat of paint in ten years wastes his talents in the paint business. He could make more money guessing what will happen to the stock market in one day and he would not strain his guessing apparatus half as much.

Beyond the ordinary tacit agreement of commerce that goods shall be as rep-

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resented and that any defect in the merchandise itself will be made good by the seller, there is no need and no propriety in any guarantee of any sort.

Did anyone ever buy a
**THE "LEAD"
GUARANTEE** keg of white lead with any guarantee other than a guarantee of purity and quality? Did anyone even hear of a white lead manufacturer "making good" a job on which his product failed? He may prophesy that the lead will last for three years or five years, according to his degree of confidence or enthusiasm; he may cite extraordinary instances of phenomenal service, but when it comes down to the cold black and white guarantee in definite figures, he is prudently non-committal. He is willing to guarantee the lead, but he is taking no chances with hard and fast contracts of service.

**BLIND
GUARANTEES** Good paint, made by a reputable manufacturer, needs no guarantee and lacking the necessary control of conditions, no one can possibly guarantee any

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paint, good or bad. For the wear of paint depends no more upon its composition than upon many other factors over which the manufacturer can have no control.

The economy of paint—that is, the cost per square yard—depends partly, of course, on the formula, but more on the method of manufacture; and the ultimate durability of the coating also depends to a certain extent on its composition. But the ordinary accidents which incite an appeal to the guarantee depend upon this factor to a slight extent only.

Thus, blistering, peeling, cracking and scaling are due almost always to defects of surface or errors in manipulation or application—factors over which the paint manufacturer has no supervision and which he cannot possibly foresee.

**THE FIVE
FACTORS** A paint manufacturer with twenty-five years' experience has always met the question of paint guarantees with the following statement:

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The factors controlling the fate of a job of painting are five:

- 1st—The paint itself;*
- 2d—The painter and his method of procedure;*
- 3d—The character and condition of surface;*
- 4th—The weather at the time of application;*
- 5th—The additions made by the painter in preparing the several coats.*

It will be seen from this that in case of failure there are four controlling conditions, not dependent upon the composition or quality of the paint, which may have caused the trouble. Let us consider them in due order:

THE PAINTER AND HIS METHOD OF PROCEDURE.

It is common knowledge that a good painter can produce results with poor paint that a poor painter cannot duplicate with good paint. It is all a

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question of knowing how. As each coat of paint requires some variation in its consistency and as each variation in the surface indicates different treatment, the chances that an ignorant or ill-informed painter may do wrong things are always present. The remedy here suggests itself—employ a competent painter and pay him the price of good work.

Paint may be likened to a physician's prescription, which is written after a careful diagnosis of the patient's constitution and ailments and is accompanied by rigorous directions for use. Mixed paints are devised to meet average conditions and they require modifications to meet individual cases. Furthermore, they are accompanied by certain rules of procedure which must be followed by the user, unless he is an expert capable of determining for himself the proper course of procedure.

If the paint is applied by an unskilled hand, the directions accompanying the

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paint should be followed religiously, and particular attention should be given to brushing out the paint and working it into the surface, using a small, rather than a large brush.

It is possible in some cases that a painter may have a prejudice against prepared paints and may either intentionally, if he is dishonest, or unintentionally, if he is merely inimical, injure or unfairly handle the paint. The remedy is to employ a painter, not only capable and honest, but fair. The writer has known of working painters who have added ammonia, water, lime water, etc., to paints with the avowed intention of ruining them.

The painter may also, from ignorance or a desire to hurry the work, prepare the surface improperly, fail to remove loose old paint, thin the several coats too much or too little, allow insufficient time for drying between coats, brush out insufficiently, etc.

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THE CHARACTER AND CONDITIONS OF SURFACE.

FACTOR
NO. 3

The durability of any paint depends more upon this than upon its composition. We have records of long service from paints embodying nearly everything that is regarded as bad in a paint formula, but the record of all paints is alike bad if the paint was not properly tempered to the surface or if the surface was not in proper condition for painting.

There is not one in the whole category of popular superstitions regarding paint, which actual experience has not thousands of times disproved. But prejudice dies hard and education advances slowly. Every paint manufacturer and every experienced painter knows that out of ten thousand cases where a properly made paint has failed to give satisfactory results, there is not one where the fault cannot, if all the facts could be ascertained, be traced to improper treatment or incorrect procedure.

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DIFFERING CONDITIONS

The character and condition of surface include the material to be painted.

Different kinds of wood require differently tempered priming coats. A resinous wood may indicate a high proportion of turpentine; a hard wood may indicate a rather stiff priming coat; an absorbent surface may call for an excess of oil; an old coat of paint may need much oil if dry and absorbent, much turpentine if hard and glossy. Old loosely adherent paint is a frequent cause of trouble. It should be scraped, wire-brushed and sand-papered away before a new coat is applied.

Here again we see the use of the intelligent painter, or if such be not available, of special advice from the paint manufacturer's technical experts.

THE WEATHER AT THE TIME OF PAINTING.

FACTOR NO. 4

Moisture is the foe of paint. It is far safer to have water in the paint than under the paint. Durable work can not be done on a moist surface with a

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pure oil paint. On such a surface an emulsion paint capable of absorbing moisture stands a better chance; though its protective value is small.

Most woods absorb moisture very readily. They will absorb the moisture from a foggy or humid atmosphere quite as readily as from rain. Incidentally, they will also absorb moisture from green plaster, so that undried plaster on the interior of a house is likely to cause as much trouble to the paint on the outside as a foggy day.

The remedy is to paint only on well dried wood, preferably after a "spell" of dry weather—the fall season, after a dry summer, is a time very favorable to successful painting.

OTHER PERILS

Cold weather is also bad painting weather. It chills and thickens the oil so that there is a temptation for the painter to add too much thinner in order to get easy working. Moreover, cold retards drying, and this further tempts the painter to ruin the paint with too much dryer. Extremely hot weather, especially

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when the wood is not absolutely dry, is likely to cause blisters, which, while they may disappear as the paint dries, nevertheless detach the paint from the wood and cause peeling at a later date.

THE ADDITIONS MADE BY THE PAINTER IN PREPARING PAINT FOR USE.

FACTOR NO. 5 No paint is "ready for use" for all purposes. Conditions of surface vary and each condition requires some variation in the consistency of the paint. Each coat should also vary somewhat in consistency and composition. All manufacturers carefully indicate these differences in their "instructions for use." The intelligent painter understands the requirements and makes additions accordingly. BUT—let us spell the word with capitals—BUT any paint, whether white lead and oil, prepared paint, or enamel, can be and very often is absolutely ruined by improper or excessive admixtures.

Leaving out of consideration the damage that a dishonest painter can do by

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adding cheapening adulterants, the ignorant painter's bad judgment can cause equal injury.

THE WORST OFFENDER The worst offender is "liquid dryer" or "Japan dryer." Cheap liquid

dryers are too often solutions of very little actual dryer in very much benzine. The addition of an excess of such dryers amounts merely to dilution of the paint with benzine. Without decrying benzine as a paint thinner, it is apparent that it should be added as a volatile thinner and not as a dryer of unknown strength.

"Japan dryer" is a dryer containing varnish gum. The "gum" in the cheaper grades is rosin. Rosin with some of the commonly used pigments forms brittle soaps, which cause cracking, chalking and scaling. If a varnish gum is required in a paint formula it should be put there in the proper proportions and with the proper balancing ingredients by the manufacturer of the paint.

BURNING UP PAINT It is the easiest thing in the world to burn up a coat of oil paint with an excess of dryers, even if they contain

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no benzine and no rosin. Too much dryer does to the paint in a short time what the air does to it in a long time—it wears out its life by oxidation. Some painters think that the more dryer there is in a paint the quicker it will dry. This is not true. After a certain limit has been reached the addition of more dryer will retard drying. There is a chemical reason for this which it is not necessary to set forth—the important point to remember is that it is a fact.

So we see that here as elsewhere we may easily have too much of a good thing.

Ordinarily there is enough dryer in a prepared paint to make it dry properly and the addition of more is at the user's risk.

In getting paint to dry it is a wise rule to hasten slowly. The oxygen of the air is the best possible dryer. Other dryers are to paint what stimulants are to a man—they produce prompt results, but they take it out of the constitution later. Better wait a week between coats than have to repaint a year sooner.

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ACCIDENTS.

A CHAPTER OF "ACCIDENTS" not included in the "five factors" already cited.

Leaking spouts, damp foundations, leaking water pipes, etc., chemical gases from neighboring factories, damp wall linings, etc., etc., are all possibilities affecting the service of a paint coating, and in considering the scope of a guarantee, must be taken into account.

Suppose a grocer in selling a barrel of flour should offer you a guarantee something like this: "I guarantee that this barrel of flour will last one year; that you will have no illness or accident during that period; that the food made from it will be uniformly palatable and wholesome and that nothing will contaminate the flour," would you buy the flour on the strength of that guarantee or would you back out of the store and hunt up a sane grocer?

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**RECORD PLUS
REPUTATION** In view of what has been said, the only possible sincere guarantee of paint is its record of past service, the reputation of the manufacturer who made it, and an expressed willingness to make good any defect in the paint itself.

**GUARANTEE—
A CONTRACT** A guarantee is in the nature of a contract and a contract implies mutual obligations. In the case of the paint guarantee the manufacturer agrees to do certain things in consideration of certain other things which the purchaser, on his part, agrees to do. Specifically, the manufacturer agrees that if all proper conditions of surface, weather, manipulation, application, etc., are observed, he will furnish the paint necessary for repainting, provided the paint itself proves defective. It is safe to say that not one such case is found in a hundred complaints. Too often the dealer accepts the complaint at its face value without due investigation, and too often also the manufacturer supplies the paint demanded, not because he believes the complaint justified, but

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because he thinks it good policy to satisfy the dealer and the consumer. But this course of procedure does not really satisfy the consumer. He is naturally glad to get the new paint; but unless he is first convinced that the original paint was not at fault, the ease with which the dealer "comes down" merely confirms his bad opinion of it.

Manufacturers have been led into an extravagant competition in guarantees, which is as needless as it is illogical. The more judicious regret the conditions, while the mail order houses have carried the practice to an extent that makes the entire proposition ridiculous.

**THE DEALER
IS THE JUDGE** The dealer is the proper person to bring the guarantee back to a safe and sane basis. He should know the general record of the paint he handles and on that record should offer it to consumers. The ordinary commercial guarantee is always implied whether stated or not, and if paint proves defective, the manufacturer is bound by common custom to "make good." But complaints

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