

*Mechanical Photography* will include all kinds of pictures which aim at a simple representation of the objects at which the camera is pointed, and will not only include all reproductions, but the great majority of portraits and landscapes. Let it be understood that I do not mean the term *mechanical* to be understood depreciatingly; on the contrary, I mean that everything that is to be depicted exactly as it is, and where all the parts are to be equally sharp and perfect, is to be included under this head. I might have used the term *literal* photography, but think the former better. This branch, for obvious reasons, will always be the most practised, and where literal unchallengeable truth is required, is the only one allowable.

*Art-Photography* will embrace all pictures where the artist, not contented with taking things as they may naturally occur, determines to infuse his mind into them, by arranging, modifying, or otherwise disposing them, so that they may appear in a more appropriate or beautiful manner than they would have been without such interference. This class may easily embrace almost all subjects. In landscapes, the artist may select the period of the year, the condition of the weather, time of the day, point of sight, length of exposure, &c., as material agencies in modifying his picture. The same in portraiture, by arrangement of light, pose, expression, presence or absence of accessories, &c.; also in the composition of pictures, by the due attention to all the necessary parts, so as to form one harmonious whole.

*High-Art Photography.*—This distinction may appear presumptuous, but I feel a necessity for it, to include certain pictures which aim at higher purposes than the majority of art-photographs, and whose aim is not merely to amuse, but to instruct, purify, and ennoble.

If such distinctions as these be admitted, we can the more easily discuss the various kinds of pictures, and assign them each to their proper class.

Our more immediate object is with what I propose to call art-photographs. With many of these productions we are quite familiar, particularly those of that true artist-photographer, Rejlander. The idea of producing art-photographs is not a new one; it is almost coeval with photography itself. In 1845, Mr. Mayall, then of Philadelphia, designed and executed a series of ten pictures on daguerreotype plates, in illustration of the Lord's Prayer. This series was highly appreciated in America, and when exhibited in this country received high encomiums from the art press. In 1848 he composed a series of six, illustrative of Campbell's "Soldier's Dream." It is to be regretted that these were only on silver plates, as they were confined therefore to his own gallery, and the great merit they possessed known only to a few. Numerous other art-photographs he composed, particularly a very fine one in illustration of the words, "And this Mortal shall put on Immortality." This work, for the fineness of conception, and noble simplicity of execution, in my opinion exceeds all that has yet been produced. This gentleman, though he has precedence in point of time, has done little or nothing in this line lately, and it is to Rejlander we are mainly indebted for popular illustrations of art-photographs. Mr. Robinson has also produced some very superior productions of this class, of which his last one, "The Holiday in the Woods," is by far the most ambitious, and by many considered his best; it is certainly the largest, but there is a deep pathos and feeling about his "Fading Away," that gives that picture a far higher place in my mind than any of his other productions.

Rejlander occasionally, and Mr. Robinson often, use more than one negative to produce their pictures.

To describe this class of picture, a word has been coined—*Composition-Photography*. Now, I object to this word, as descriptive of what I propose to call art-photographs. It is not sufficiently definite, and is open to misconstruction, and moreover, it is descriptive rather of the means taken to produce the picture, than its nature when done.

I may be told, that "composition," in an artistic sense, means the operation of devising, arranging, modifying, and

successfully carrying out the artist's conception. The idea may exist in the painter's mind, but the reducing to practice, in a proper and harmonious manner, the various parts required to form the picture, so that the idea conceived shall at last be adequately expressed—this operation, partly mental, partly physical, is what an artist will tell me is meant by composition, and that photographs produced by such means he would call *Composition-Photography*. Well, in an artistic sense this is right, but as the word is for photographers, they cannot be expected to understand it in this refined and technical sense, but will attach to it the plain and literal meaning, a print *composed* from different photographs.

Take a notable art-photograph, Rejlander's "Two Ways of Life," and ask an artist if that is a composition-photograph? "Most assuredly," he will say, "as much so as any painting, and a very clever composition." Now ask a prosaic photographer, "Is that a composition-photograph?" and his reply will be, "Certainly, composed from ever so many negatives, and very nicely printed-in."

Now that cannot be a very happy word, that is capable of conveying such different meanings relating to the one subject.

Again, take Lake Price's "Don Quixote in his Study," or his "Roman Festa," and ask the artist and the photographer, are these composition-photographs? The artist will exclaim, "Yes, and fine ones," while the camera-man will declare "they are nothing of the kind: they are both from single negatives, and printed all at one time."

Here I fancy I hear the man with the black fingers exclaim to the artist, "What do you know about photography? come here, and I'll show you something worth calling a composition-photograph. Here's a print five feet square, composed of twenty-five negatives, and I'll defy you to tell where one ends and the other begins. They are taken from a large map. That's what I call a composition-photograph!" Artist (with knitted brows and violent manner), "That a composition-photograph! It's no composition at all; mechanical drawing by sunlight, nothing else."

This is sufficient to show that the term *composition-photography* is not definite enough, and that it will be difficult for the photographic mind to separate it from the idea of printing from many negatives. Indeed, if we don't mind, we shall get into trouble and confusion with this question of printing from many negatives, by allowing mechanical ingenuity to usurp the place of artistic skill. For my own part, I don't like printing one picture from several negatives. There may be times when it cannot be avoided; but, wherever possible, it should be carefully shunned. Artistically speaking, it is false in principle, and photographically a step in the wrong direction. Its tendency is to cripple art and degrade photography. It is making the conception of the artist depend on the skill of the printer. It is a confession of weakness on the part of both, by doing in fragments what is ultimately to be represented as if done as a whole.

When an artist conceives a brilliant thought, and hastens to put it on canvas, how he sighs that he is obliged to work piecemeal, that he cannot with one sweep of his brush realise the thought in his mind. It is the proud boast of photography that it can do this. In depicting a portrait it does not begin with the head, go on with the hands, then put in the drapery, and finally the accessories: it works all at once, as a whole. This is the natural mode, and it was reserved for patchwork-photographers to discover the method of taking the head on one plate, the body on another, and the feet on a third, and then by printing them together to produce a tasteless monstrosity.

See you lovely landscape of hill and dale, water and sky, how shall I proceed to depict it? Shall I first photograph the river, and then do the trees—next week take you hoary old castle, and some other time the distant hills and sky, and then, by ingenious printing, fit and match them together, like a child does its toy puzzle? Or shall I un-