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AMATEUR PORTRAITURE.

THERE is no branch of the photographic art more fascinating than portraiture; and whilst excellence is generally supposed to belong only to the professional photographer, who is properly equipped with glass-house and proper accessories, there are few amateurs who have not made some attempts to depict the "human face divine," beginning by victimizing their friends as sitters, and ending by being victimized themselves in the demands for prints from some especially fortunate negative.

The much neglected glass positive was at one time most in favour amongst amateurs, but it now seems almost entirely discarded or forgotten, a circumstance much to be regretted, as some of these positives, when really good, were very beautiful. The fine white positive produced with the proto-nitrate developer, having a texture like matt silver, has rarely been surpassed by any class of photographs. The good alabastrine positive, either plain or skilfully tinted, possessed qualities we have not often seen equalled. But all these, as well as the common flat tawny positive, which was no credit to photography and could claim nothing of art, seem to have had their day, and may possibly, ere long, be named with daguerreotypes, as belonging to the extinct arts. Paper prints, especially card portraits, at present seem to claim almost sole attention from professional and amateur photographers.

Amongst amateurs a very general impression prevails that a glass house is necessary to portraiture. There can be no doubt that entire control over the lighting of the sitter is of great importance in securing the best results, and that to the professional portraitist it is imperative. There are, nevertheless, a number of effects possible to the amateur which are often pleasing and well worthy of a little attention. If other evidence or experience were wanting, the pictures contributed by Lady Hawarden to the recent Photographic Exhibition, furnished ample illustration of what might be done without the facilities of the professional portraitist. The majority of the pictures exhibited were taken in the drawing-room of her ladyship's residence; many of the figures being brought close up to the window, a portion of which, with the balcony, foliage, &c., beyond, were included in the picture. These, whilst satisfactory as pictures and artistic studies, independent of any likeness they might possess, were, we understand, not less valuable as portraits. The absence of the backgrounds and other accessories of the professional studio, we should regard in many instances as a positive advantage, as we have no wish to see amateurs competing with professional men in producing the conventional photographic portrait, however perfectly it might be achieved.

As a general rule the amateur is confined to the use of an ordinary room or the open air, and in both cases, by a little care and judgment, satisfactory lighting may frequently be obtained. To begin with the light in an ordinary sitting room with one window, with which we have seen very fine

effects produced, especially where the window was lofty. The sitter should, as a general rule, not be placed exactly opposite the window but a little behind it; a folding screen, or a clothes horse, covered with a white sheet, and placed parallel with the window may be made to throw a very good reflected light on the shadowed side of the face and figure. The nearer the sitter is placed to the window the more violent the contrasts of light and shadow will be; the further removed from the window the less violent the contrasts, but the longer the sitting necessary. On a bright day, and when the apartment is well lighted, the sitter may be placed at the side of the room opposite to the window. In some winter experiments we found that an exposure of thirty seconds was sufficient for a negative of a sitter placed twelve feet from a window, not much exceeding seven feet by four feet, using Dallmeyer's No. 1 B lens with open aperture. By a little management the actual furniture of a room may frequently be made to answer for the background. Care must be used, however, to avoid cutting up the picture by a number of spotty lights, and also to avoid having objects so much out of focus that their forms are not even indicated. A golden rule for portraiture in an ordinary apartment is to use a freely bromized collodion, which will not only give the maximum of sensitiveness, but will also check the tendency to undue contrasts which generally exists where the light reaches the sitter from one small source. As a further means of counteracting the tendency to black shadows, a full exposure should be given, and a strong iron developer used.

In open air portraiture as a rule an opposite tendency to that in an ordinary sitting room prevails. In the latter, as we have said, the tendency to undue contrast is common; in the former to want of contrast and consequent flatness. A collodion with a moderate amount of bromide is most useful here, and the presence of a little free iodine will be an advantage. Where it is convenient the sheltered angle of a wall or building should be sought so as to secure some shadow on one side of the face. With an equal light all around it is almost impossible to secure roundness or relief. If there be an open expanse of sky immediately behind the sitter it will be almost impossible to prevent fog from the mass of diffused light entering the lens. In all attempts at portraiture in the open air it is desirable to have the lens well protected from diffused light, the use of a cone of paste-board, blackened inside, which we have often recommended, will be found very useful. Where it is possible, a screen or awning should be placed above the head of the sitter to prevent the undue action of top light, of which there is, of course, a very large proportion. As regards background, a portion of a building, a portico, an arbour or rustic seat, a few shrubs or trees, or a combination of parts of several of these may often be made to give an excellent effect; and as in open air portraiture the exposure is often very short, a sufficiently small stop to give moderately good definition to the background objects, may without disadvantage be used. Where the amateur may prefer it a plain background may