

bright sunshine, I had made many appointments with friends who wished to be "taken," most of whom have been grievously disappointed; but this was not the case with all, for I accidentally discovered that a stale developer gave brilliant results, while a newly mixed one produced faint and stained negatives which were, moreover, most difficult to intensify.

On the first occasion when this came under my notice, I had by me about half an ounce of an old developing mixture of sulphate of iron and ammonia, from 10 to 30 grains to the ounce, but the strength was unknown, the mixture being, in fact, residues of old developers, and which I had before used with good results. In the midst then of my troubles, one morning, when baths, new and old, neutral and acid, and newly mixed developers of every kind (iron), gave nothing but these unsatisfactory negatives, I turned to my old developer, and at once the negative came out clear and red. This I tried two or three times and with the same satisfactory results, as long, in fact, as this precious mixture lasted; after that, all was dull and dirty. I racked my memory to recall the exact composition of this, but in vain. About four days afterwards, I again experienced this peculiarity in a developer, which had nothing that I knew to recommend it, except that it had been mixed four or five days, being, in fact, one that had failed on the previous occasions.

It then occurred to me, that its merit might be due to its age, and, acting on this notion, I have since used developers which have been mixed four or five days, with the best effect.

A sulphate of iron developer which had been made about ten days, I also found to give clear negatives, though showing signs of decomposition when poured on the plate.

The effect above stated was so strikingly suggestive of the advantage under some circumstances of stale developers that I have communicated it to you: and the fact also raises two questions—whether during the last few days the light was at fault, or whether the great heat we have experienced has not affected the developer or the neutral action of the developer and the bath. To me it appears certain that in the negatives I took during the period referred to, the invisible image was on the plate in a fit state to emerge as a clean and brilliant negative, if I had had a proper developer to bring it out; such in fact as the developer I at first accidentally applied, or as the developer I afterwards designedly used a few days old, with the same good effect.—Yours truly,

M. A.

May I ask for an answer to the following photographic queries.

Tannin.

1. Is a bath acidified with nitric acid as good for the tannin process as with acetic? If not, why not?
 2. Is an exposure of two minutes with Dallmeyer's triplet, full aperture, *i.e.*, largest diaphragm, long, moderate, or short?
 3. Is honey always an accelerator? is it not liable to stain the negative? is not plain tannin the easiest to work? M. A.
- [It is well known to experienced operators that an iron developing solution works much better after it has been mixed a few days than when new; the presence of a per-salt having a similar influence to that of an acid in the production of clean shadows. Professional positive portraitists frequently used to mix a Winchester of strong solution months before it was required, and then dilute for use. For negatives we always prefer to have a stock mixed ready for use, especially in hot weather. There is, however, in addition to this a difference in certain samples of the sulphate of iron. A professional portraitist of great experience recently informed us that he was much troubled with thin, fogged negatives for some weeks; the trouble disappeared at once on using a new sample of iron. There is something more to be learned on this subject; but it is certain that an old brown iron solution is a great aid to clean shadows, although it lacks energy in developing at times. When it is not at hand the plentiful use of acetic is the best remedy for the difficulties which troubled you.
- In answer to your other queries we may state that as a rule nitric acid is not desirable in a bath for dry plates, from the fact that organic matter is generally used in the preservative, which is apt to be decomposed by nitric acid. For this reason the organic acid is better in such cases. 2. An exposure of two minutes is excessively long for a wet plate and good light with the full aperture of the lens you name. One-fourth of that time or less would generally be long enough. We recently saw some fine negatives of portrait groups with foliage background, by

Col. Stuart Wortley, taken with the full aperture of No. 1 and 2 triple, by Dallmeyer; some of them had received instantaneous exposures, and none more than a few seconds. 3. We believe honey always to accelerate tannin plates; but in some hands simple tannin gives less trouble. See an article by Mr. Fassitt in the present number.—Ed.]

FOGGING NITRATE BATHS.

SIR,—One of your correspondents of last week, J. Bonny, seems to be in the bath fog, where I have often been in days gone by. I have found in my experience, that by making it alkaline with oxide of silver, and sunning it three or four hours, filter well, and drop in a little dilute nitric acid, put to sleep in a dark corner three or four days, I have always found it to work well. It is this resting that is required. If you work it close upon your experiments it will generally fog. If this plan won't cure it, something else is at fault.

I wish some of your correspondents would help me out of Sutton's rapid dry plate fog. I have lately been experimenting on his process, wishing to get a more certain rapid dry process. I cannot succeed yet. I shall try a few more experiments. If I cannot succeed I must go back to the old toning process. I have worked Sutton's gum arabic process, in every form, to a nicety, and have used all his remedies, spoken of in his works, to no purpose. Can you set me right?—I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

JAMES DATE.

Watchet, July 13, 1863.

Talk in the Studio.

DOUBLE SULPHATE DEVELOPER.—A correspondent says:—I have just succeeded in taking some excellent negatives with the developer given in your last by Messrs. Beckett and Willis, and find it quite equal to what they say of it. It also admits great latitude of exposure and will also bear nearly double the exposure actually necessary, which is less than half that required with ordinary iron developer.

THE ATHENÆUM ON PHOTOGRAPHY.—As a critical journal the *Athenæum* has earned the character of being always severe and seldom just; and where photography is concerned, it is often shallowly inappreciative, and for some reason or other, spiteful. We have before had occasion to call attention to scolding paragraphs relating to photography and photographers, and we have before expressed a conviction that, as the gentleman presiding over its pages has opportunities of knowing better, these paragraphs creep in during his absence on summer tours, and are the offspring of incapable and disappointed painters, whose occupation with the palette and pencil, thanks to photography, quite gone. An amusing specimen of scolding, and of ignorant self-sufficiency recently appeared in its pages, in a notice of "Adjutor," a collection of photographic studies. We had smiled at the paragraph, but did not intend to notice it. We find, however, in our esteemed contemporary, the *Society's Journal*, a few such trenchant comments upon the remarks in question that we cannot refrain from quoting them:—"There are certain writers who, in noticing what is called Compositive Photography, are affected in the same manner that an infuriated bull is on the sight of a red rag; and there is much of the same indiscriminating, unreasoning fury shown in the paragraph on which we are commenting. There is, too, a Dogberry-like tone of scolding, and a priggish dogmatism, which is generally to be found in shallow critics, who make up what is wanting in genuine knowledge by a vehement and extravagant self-assertion. As an instance of this, note the confident, not to say impertinent, tone of this passage:—'Once for all, the "Profession" may take our word that, unless composed with the most subtle art (art of which photography has, as yet, not the dimmest idea), its compositions are, to painters, abominable.' Now, whose word is it that we are to take? Probably, some one as ignorant as he is obscure. These anonymous Browns and Joneses, who are allowed to display the capacity of the art-slang vocabulary, and who so cleverly juggle words—not ideas—with a bewildering kaleidoscopic effect, and run as many changes of cant terms as a set of bellringers, assume to themselves an authority, an *ipse dixit* tone, which, to say the least, is simply funny. The patronage of these writers is not less amusing than their wilful, or, perhaps more probably still, their absolute, ignorance. This writer says, 'As pleasant memoranda of things seen and enjoyed, as suggestions of the unseen