

PREFACE.

IN penning the closing words which stand as Preface to a complete Volume, we feel that a glance over its pages as a record of a year's history of our art, a year of much gloom and depression in that art, affords much ground for congratulation and for hope in the future. For, notwithstanding that gloom and the commercial causes upon which it has, not unnaturally, been based, there has been no stagnation of interest in the progress of photography either as art or science; but rather renewed inquiry into the causes of shortcoming and of excellence, and increased activity in the effort to excel, and in the contributions to the storehouses of experience from whence the aids to excellence may be drawn.

We have had, it is true, no great or startling discovery to chronicle, no distinctively fresh fields to lay open, or new direction for research to point out. Nor is it necessary to the progress of the art that novelty should characterise its operations. It is more important that an active interest should prevail, and a readiness to apply the materials won; and that—to use the words of Sir John Herschel—the ball should be caught up at the rebound by emulous hands, in order that the march of progress should proceed with no tardy or intermitting steps. And it is in this aspect of our art we see cause for congratulation. Experimentalists have been busy re-examining the true sources and exact limits of our knowledge; men of thought and men of action have contributed much during the year to give surer bases to practice and a higher character to results. Discussion has been active and intelligent, and, with insignificant exceptions, has been free from petty jealousies and rancours which have at some times, unfortunately, embittered scientific controversy. In the art aspects of photography especially increased interest has prevailed. The technical consideration of a new discovery like photography necessarily precedes its artistic application. But the technics once mastered, the art capabilities receive attention. This phase of photography, which has been growing in importance for years, has received during the past year a fuller development, and photographers generally are earnestly inquiring how they may best improve the art character of their work.

A photographic journal of any influence must represent the present condition of the art as well as be the pioneer of progress. Communicating weekly with many thousands of readers, and still more directly with many hundreds of correspondents, the Editor is necessarily brought into intimate relation with much of the representative