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RETOUCHING PRINTS, AND PERMANENCY.

It is a fact familiar to most photographers that any tendency to fading in a photographic print is much more noticeable in retouched copies than in those which have required or received no aid from the pencil of the artist. A perceptible distinction in the tint of the applied pigment and that of the general tone of the print is generally regarded as fatal evidence that the change from its pristine bloom into a faded and yellow state is already set up as soon as the markings of the artist's pencil become offensively apparent by this difference in colour from the rest of the picture.

This difference in colour, which is generally regarded as conclusive evidence against the photograph, is not in reality—at least, in many cases—any proof of fading in the print. In a large number of pictures which we have examined for some time back we have found that the change of colour was in the pigment used for retouching, and not in the photograph. As this change not only spoils the beauty of many fine prints, but aids in strengthening and perpetuating the common notion of the instability of photographs—a notion based upon too much real ground to permit any one concerned for the credit of the art to permit without protest the addition of fallacious evidence—it is just worth a little thought on the part of photographers, and worth, also, a little care, to avoid the use of the offending pigments, which may be easily done.

The great variety of tones obtained in the ordinary mode of silver printing renders necessary, almost invariably, a tint made by mixing various pigments suited to each print or batch of prints. Different artists employ different pigments to obtain the tint required; but in almost all cases the warm purple or rosy tint of a gold-toned print is obtained by adding carmine or crimson lake to Indian ink, either with or without other pigments, as circumstances may demand. Carmine is always a fugitive colour, and many samples of crimson lake are scarcely less so. Hence it happens that retouching portions in which any of these fugitive rosy pigments have been employed to give the warm blooming tint of the photograph are apt in time to change, leaving a colder, blacker tint behind. This, by contrast with the warm tint of the photograph, makes it appear that the latter has become redder or browner in tone, and suggests the incipient change which generally issues in a faded, sickly, worthless picture. In some cases we have found that the retouched portions have appeared of a bluish black, and in some a slightly greenish black, from which it would appear that Prussian blue had been employed. We have known artists employ, for retouching, a mixture of Prussian blue, sepia, and carmine. This will give at first a very rich purple brown; but the carmine will disappear, and the Prussian blue is apt to turn green, and the resulting tint is a greenish grey or brown, of an uncomfortable tint, which a careless

observer concludes is due to some fading in the photograph underneath the retouching.

It will be seen, then, that the pigment to be used for retouching, whether merely for correcting and touching-out spots, or for more elaborate work, is a matter of more importance than might at first be supposed; for if the print remain permanent, and the retouched portions become colder in tint, incongruous and patchy effect must sooner or later be the result. But if the print change a little also, and become a little browner in tint, whilst the retouched portions assume a colder tone, the effect soon becomes very offensive. It is, moreover, quite unnecessary to use fugitive tints for the purpose. A capital and permanent photographic colour may be made by the mixture of warm sepia and purple madder: additional depth may be given to this by the addition of a little Indian ink; or what we prefer is the black sold by good artists as British ink, which is a fine rich black, which works well, and is permanent. Rose madder is permanent, and although it is not so pleasant to work, may be used in place of carmine or crimson lake. There are other permanent pigments; but these will serve admirably. In any case, the fugitive or changeable pigments should be avoided.

There is another source of actual change in the photograph, which sometimes is due to the retouching. It is customary in all cases to add some vehicle to the colour which shall give it sufficient depth and gloss to harmonize properly with the surface of the print. In very many cases this vehicle is ordinary gum-water, and this is too often used in an acid condition. Here, of course, is an inevitable source of injury to the print which is altogether unnecessary and unjustifiable. If gum be used it should be quite fresh and free from acidity. Fresh dilute albumen will often be found a better vehicle, however, and give a surface which is in more perfect harmony with that of the photograph than any other vehicle. If it be desired that the retouching shall be immovable, and that the print shall bear sponging afterwards, a trace of chrome alum, as pointed out in Mr. Swan's patent, might be added.

In all cases a print is better for waxing or collodionizing after the process of retouching.

THE CONSTITUTION AND DECOMPOSITION OF ALBUMEN.

M. THEILE has lately been making some experiments having for their object the precise determination of the formula of albumen. The white of sixteen eggs was dissolved in a large bulk of water, filtered, and the clear solution precipitated by alcohol. After subsidence, the supernatant liquid was poured off, and the clots of albumen further purified by agitation with ether; they were then collected,