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ACETATE OF MORPHINE WITH WET PLATES.

THE wet collodion process is generally found so simple and so certain, in the hands of photographers of even moderate experience, that but few attempts have been made to modify it in principle. In dry processes the complete removal of free nitrate of silver has, for some time past, been regarded as an imperative condition of success; whilst in the wet process the presence of free nitrate is generally regarded as not less imperative. Experiments have occasionally been made to test the possibility of working, whilst wet, a plate which had been prepared for the dry process, but not with any degree of success which has been an inducement to work the matter out.

A few weeks ago Mr. Bartholomew, the originator of the acetate of morphine process, in a brief note, pointed out that plates prepared by this process, when exposed wet, gave as good results as when exposed dry; and further, that the plates so prepared would keep moist a much longer time than plates on which the free nitrate had been permitted to remain, and that, therefore, for long exposures, or for circumstances in which it was necessary to keep the plate a few hours between preparation and development, an immense advantage was gained.

This was important, but there are other circumstances in which it has been found useful to use the acetate of morphine treated whilst wet. Mr. Burgess, of Norwich, whose charming Eburneum pictures many photographers are familiar with, informs us that he finds it a great advantage, in producing the transparent positives in the camera, to use this process. The plate is prepared in the usual manner, then immersed for a short time in a dipping-bath containing distilled water, washed thoroughly under the tap, then immersed in the dipping-bath containing one grain acetate of morphine solution, from whence it is transferred to the dark slide, and is ready for exposure. It is found not quite so sensitive as with the presence of nitrate of silver, double the exposure being, however, sufficient. The development is effected in the same way recommended for the dry morphine plates; that is, with a gelatino-iron developer, to which a drop or two of silver solution is added.

The advantage gained here is much more certainty, and complete control over the operation, together with great cleanliness and excellence of result. Mr. Burgess, who is an exceedingly practical experimentalist, has promised to let us have the result of further experiment with this method. In the meantime, for keeping a wet plate for a few hours, it seems pretty certain this process gives an additional power to the photographer.

PHOTOGRAPHING WHITE DRAPERY.

WE recently received a letter from a provincial photographer asking for some advice as to the best mode of photographing white drapery, and the most suitable collodion for the purpose. He was about to photograph a bridal party in which delicate white draperies and abundance of white lace were prevalent, and felt some uncertainty as to the rendering of detail and avoiding "chalkiness." We have also on several occasions recently received examples of photographs with white drapery in which all detail was lost, a mere white patch taking the place of a piece of drapery of delicate texture. Arranged in graceful folds, the task of rendering such drapery is not altogether an easy one: the folds and texture of white muslin, the texture and pattern of white lace, when arranged over other white drapery, require all the skill of the photographer in lighting and manipulation; but by attention to a few hints, especially intended for the inexperienced, the difficulty may be considerably diminished.

In the first place, it should be remembered as a golden rule, that—contrary to the notions of some inexperienced photographers—light draperies require a full exposure. The natural tendency of the photographer is to shorten the exposure for any light object, and if he is dealing with something which is altogether light, like statuary in marble or plaster, this tendency may, under many circumstances, be with propriety carried out; but in dealing with the human figure in white drapery the case is different. Sufficient exposure must be given to the face, and other parts not white; if the exposure be somewhat short, there will be a temptation to continue the development to secure full detail in the face; and by the time this is done the half-tone in the white drapery will be buried in deposit, and it will be almost impossible by any amount of printing to bring out detail. The rule, then, for a portrait in which white drapery prevails, is full exposure and short development. It is by over-development rather than by over-exposure that the delicate details in high lights or white parts of the subject are most commonly buried and lost. Let it further be borne in mind that even if the picture contained whites only, whether drapery or statuary, properly lighted there will be little risk of losing detail by long exposure, provided over-development be avoided.

The question of the lighting is, however, a very important one. A concentrated and direct light is required in order to render, with any approximation to pictorial value, the folds in white drapery. So much light is reflected by every portion of the drapery itself, that if much diffused or reflected light reach the figure, a flat, tame picture must inevitably result. A direct concentrated high side light, giving tolerably strong contrasts in the subject and well marked shadows, will be necessary to give relief and force to