

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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A PHOTOGRAPHER'S RELIEF FUND.

SHALL IT BE ESTABLISHED IN SIX MONTHS?

ONE of the chief obstacles to the establishment of a Photographer's Relief Fund, as to many other good projects, is the difficulty of securing a beginning. All are agreed that to commence such a project and fail to carry it to a successful issue would be mortifying in the last degree to all concerned, and would injure rather than promote the cause of charity; and as success in such a purpose cannot be quite certain, it is probable that this uncertainty may in some degree account for the inaction in the matter of practical men. We propose, therefore, to those interested in the matter, a test operation, by which some idea may be obtained of the success which will follow the completion of a satisfactory organization for the administration of a Benevolent Fund. Of the more complex machinery involved in a Provident Fund we say nothing at present.

A generous photographic amateur offered, in our columns a fortnight ago, to give fifty pounds to a fund, if within six months a satisfactory committee were formed for its administration. We simply propose to work out that idea to its legitimate issue. Let those of our readers who believe that such an organization is desirable, and that it should be formed as early as possible, follow the example of the amateur just referred to, just in such proportion as they feel disposed to contribute. They will simply have to write, undertaking to contribute as many shillings or as many pounds, either as donations or annual subscriptions, as they think right to give, on condition that a satisfactory committee be formed for its administration within six months. We shall neither receive subscriptions nor publish names at present, but shall preserve a record of the offers, and in due time publish the result—that is, the amount of money conditionally promised. If the promise of success justify further action, we think that it will not be difficult to induce a committee of capable and trustworthy men to undertake the necessary steps for forming a permanent organization for administering the fund. This done, a treasurer would be appointed, to whom the contributions might be forwarded direct, and who would duly publish his acknowledgments. If, on the other hand, the response to an invitation like this be insufficient to justify any permanent organization, that part of the question will be set at rest for the present.

This plan will, we think, afford a practical means of testing the question as to how far a general conviction prevails as to the need of such an organization, and how far a widespread willingness to contribute to such a fund exists. Besides tending to settle these questions and some others raised by a correspondent whose letter appears on another page, it affords an opportunity for those interested in the question to commit themselves at once to some tangible step. We shall hope to hear from many of our readers.

THE EFFECT OF MANIPULATION ON THE CHARACTER OF NEGATIVES.

MOST experienced photographers have observed in the course of their practice that the mode of manipulation has some effect on the character of the finished work: not merely in what may be termed the mechanical character of the result, but also on points that might be supposed to be due to chemical action. Of course it is natural enough to expect that careless manipulation should produce such defects as uneven films, stains, and other irregularities; but it would scarcely, at first glance, appear a matter of course that hardness or softness, excess of detail or intensity, should be largely due to purely manipulatory causes. There are, however, various modes in which manipulation may influence the character of the result, some of which are familiar to practical photographers; but we are about to point to one which is, we believe, unfamiliar—at any rate it has not before been pointed out.

The fact to which we are about to refer was pointed out to us by one of our most successful professional photographers, who, having observed the circumstance accidentally, proceeded, in the course of considerable experience during the summer with large plates, to test the matter carefully, so as to leave no doubt as to the certainty of the results. His position is this: that in using precisely the same materials, in the same proportions, with the same exposure, a negative in which harmony and softness shall prevail, or one in which contrast and intensity shall prevail, may be produced at will by the mode of manipulating during development. Some operators will be disposed here to exclaim, "Of course it will depend upon whether the free silver solution be driven off the plate, or retained when the developer is poured on." It is true that this would affect the result, a less vigorous negative being produced when the silver solution is driven off by the mode of applying the developer; but this is not what is meant. The difference to which we refer, between the prevalence of contrast or detail, will depend upon the mode of holding the plate, and whether it is held still or kept in motion. Assuming that the chemicals, &c., are in good condition, and the exposure right, if the plate be held still after the developer is applied, a soft harmonious negative full of detail will be the result; whilst, all the conditions remaining the same, if the plate be kept in constant motion after the developer is applied, a negative in which contrast and intensity rather than detail prevail will be invariably obtained. These are the facts brought under our attention as the result of careful observation, no theory being offered in explanation of them.