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PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTING ON THE MARGIN OF PRINTS.

We have recently been favoured by our esteemed collaborator, Mr. E. L. Wilson, with some large prints of the ruins of Chicago after its recent terrible devastating fire, produced by Mr. Landy, of Cincinnati. The remnants of some fine buildings still stand, affording just sufficient suggestion of how noble a city has been desolated. The photography is exceedingly perfect, and dreary as in some senses is the effect of heaps of brick and stone ruins, the treatment of the photographer has conferred a pictorial charm on his work.

The especial characteristics of the prints to which we wish to call the attention of our readers is a very practical one, which may be found worthy of frequent adoption. The title of the picture, and several references to special objects in the view, are printed on the margin of the print by means of photography, and apparently by the same exposure as the print. It will frequently happen that the addition of the name of the subject will be a great advantage on a print; but in cases like the present, where much of the value of the picture depends on the facilities it presents for ready and satisfactory reference, this mode of printing becomes of especial value. We have, for instance, upon prominent objects amid the ruins, figures to guide to references in the margin. Here, for instance, we find on the ruins of a gothic building the figure 3 printed white; looking to the margin, we find that 3 refers to St. Paul's Church. A building in the print marked 4 we find, by reference to the margin, is the Post Office; 7 is Tremont House, 8 is Trinity Church, and so on.

The mode in which this printing appears to be on this wise—or, at least, might be effected in this manner:—A clean margin of bare glass being scraped round the negative, an accurately fitting mask of paper or similar substance is placed so as to join up to the edge of the picture. Upon this mask is written the necessary inscription in an opaque or non-actinic ink. The mask is selected of such a thickness that it is equivalent in opacity to the half-tones of the negative, so that it permits the margin of the print to acquire a delicate tint of brown, somewhat deeper than an india tint, sufficiently deep to render the letters of the inscription to appear white and legible on a tinted ground, but not sufficiently deep to detract in any degree from the force or effect of the print, the tinted margin being really rather an improvement than otherwise. The figures on the objects in the print would be, of course, written, duly reversed, on the negative in a non-actinic ink. Proper care would, of course, be taken to reverse the writing which appears on the margin in placing the mask on the negative.

There is, of course, nothing new in the possibility described, but we have never before seen the idea so well and so thoroughly applied as here. The example may with advantage be followed with a large number of photographic subjects.

RETOUCHING: ITS USE AND ABUSE.

BY G. C. WALLICH, M.D.

THE opinions so ably expressed in the Editorial bearing the above title, and published in the PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS of the 29th September last, are so thoroughly to the point and so well calculated to place in its true bearings the growing tendency amongst photographers to regard "retouching" as an integral portion of their everyday work, and indispensable wherever a high degree of finish is demanded, that they cannot be too strongly enforced or too carefully acted upon.

In the article referred to you aver, with perfect truth, that "photography, of all the fine arts, is probably the least plastic in its nature, and most bounded by material conditions; and hence it is of vital importance that the photographer should possess every material aid which can be rendered available in his art." And in order to prevent misconception as to the legitimate purposes and limits to which "retouching" should be confined, you lay down as an axiom that it ought to be resorted to only with one of the three following objects:—To secure those relations of colour to colour which are, in certain cases, inaccurately reproduced in the monochrome of the photograph; (2) to correct incidental—or, in other words, technical—errors caused by imperfect manipulation and lighting; (3) and, lastly, to remedy what may be termed accidental or temporary imperfections in the living model—as, for example, scars, freckles, and the like. And you sum up your argument by declaring that, "confined within the limits here indicated, retouching on the negative is, in capable and judicious hands, a legitimate and wholesome adjunct to the result of light and the lens;" but that, "carried beyond these bounds, or attempted by the ignorant or incapable, it becomes one of the most dangerous and degrading innovations to which photography could be subjected."

This is undoubtedly strong language, but it is not one whit too strong; and were proof of its truth needed beyond that which your reasoning itself supplies, such proof has very recently been produced, and in a most conclusive manner, by the important share photography has taken in the monster trial which is at present occupying so much of the public attention. Before supplementing your observations with a few remarks of my own, I may, perhaps, be allowed to point out that so fully impressed have I been with the danger and suicidal tendency (as regards the prospects of photography) of all processes of "retouching"