

The Photographic News, May 14, 1880.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN AND OUT OF THE STUDIO.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE SPECTRA OF THE STARS—PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT CLUBS—PHOTOGRAPHS OF PAINTINGS—PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE VICTORIA DOCKS EXTENSION.

Photography and the Spectra of the Stars.—The investigations of Dr. Huggins, whose paper on the subject read at the annual meeting of the Photographic Society will be well remembered by our readers, have been to a large extent confirmed by Dr. Henry Draper, who has for some time past been working in a similar direction. Dr. Draper has obtained photographic spectra of Arcturus, Capella, Vega, Jupiter, Venus, Mars, and the Moon, using a refractor in preference to a reflector, differing in this respect from the practice of Dr. Huggins. Owing to the difference in actinic power in the spectral lines, it is sometimes necessary to over-expose at one end in order to have lines visible at the other, and hence a difficulty in manipulation arises. Dr. Draper thinks that with a refractor the slit card may be so adjusted as to yield a spectrum tolerably wide at F and G, gradually diminishing towards H, and becoming finally almost a line at M, and thus a photograph of uniform intensity may be obtained at one exposure. There is, however, the drawback of a great loss of light, and hence Dr. Draper intends to use in future a reflector of the large size of twenty-eight inches, which will collect nearly five times the light of the twelve-inch refractor previously employed. Dr. Draper describes the spectra of Arcturus and Capella, Vega, and α Aquilæ as so similar to the solar spectrum, that he has not been able to detect any material differences. In this respect, so far as Arcturus is concerned, he differs from Dr. Huggins, who found the line K stronger relatively to H than it is in the solar spectrum. With regard to Vega, Dr. Draper's experience seems to coincide with that of Dr. Huggins, confirming the latter's opinion as to the preponderance of hydrogen in the atmosphere of that star. We note that while Dr. Huggins has stated his intention of endeavouring to photograph the ultra-violet part of the spectra of *gaseous nebulae*, Dr. Draper expresses the hope that before long this will be done, for in the *gaseous nebulae* the most elementary condition of matter will doubtless be found, a coincidence of opinion which, whether by accident or design, is worthy of remark. The spectroscope has done wonders since its invention, and it appears destined, in conjunction with photography, to assist in unlocking the secrets of nature in a way which could scarcely have been anticipated in its early days. Who would have imagined, for instance, that by means of the spectrum it could have been ascertained that Arcturus was but an ancient sun, whose light is fading, and whose fire is dying away?

Photographic Portrait Clubs.—Are portrait clubs conducive to the well-being of photography? We don't know why it should be, but, as far as our experience goes, "club" work is nearly always of an inferior description. Systematically worked, no doubt it pays, and we can point to one instance where an absolute fortune has been made, mainly due to clubs. Perhaps those who are not in the secret are not aware where the profit comes in. Out of the number who pay their money and bind themselves over to appear before the photographer on some fitting day or opportunity, a certain percentage invariably fail to do so. They never think of the matter at the right time, they hate having their portrait taken, and put off the evil day as long as possible; they leave the country, and in some rare instances they shuffle off the mortal coil. The doctrine of averages is as true in this as in other things, and the photographer of

course reaps the advantage. But somehow it does not seem possible to regard a "club" sitter in the same light as one who comes of his own free will. Perhaps the money has been paid some time before, and there is the sensation of what is known in some trading circles as "working a dead horse"; or it may be the photographer looks upon the sitter as one of a battalion whose feelings have been influenced by the persuasive powers of the promoter, and that he has been talked into coming, rather than moved thereto by the force of his inner consciousness. Whatever the cause may be, the photographer does not take the interest he would did the sitter not belong to a club, and the work suffers in consequence. And then some of the "canvassers" who tout for these club portraits! What out-at-elbows, seedy, frowsy gentlemen some of them are! We would that all photographers were flourishing, that the public were as ready to be photographed as the amiable pigs in the favoured land of Cockaigne are to be killed and eaten, and that there were no need for photographic clubs.

Photographs of Paintings.—A correspondent points out, in reference to our note last week on the Royal Academy pictures, that there would be a difficulty in the way were an artist to have his paintings photographed for purposes of sale. The copyright of a painting, according to the present state of the law, is vested in the proprietor for the time being, and that were an artist to allow copies of his picture to be sold, it would introduce complications on the original being parted with to a purchaser. He further adds that he has frequently had to photograph pictures when it was desired to preserve a memento of them, but in every case he has had to destroy the negatives in the presence of the artist. This may be so; but we do not see that the artist cannot transfer his rights to the purchaser so far as the photographs are concerned. It is obvious that whoever photographed the picture and sold the photographs would have to pay for the privilege of so doing, and the retention of the copyright by the artist, or its transference to a purchaser, would be a simple matter of arrangement. The publicity given to his work, to say nothing of the royalty, would certainly benefit the artist, and would rather add to the value of a picture than lessen it. There is one advantage which would most assuredly result from the sale of such photographs, and that is, they would be brought into competition with the superb productions of Goupil and other Continental copyists, and inferior manipulators could not then be tolerated. To copy a picture successfully requires the operator not merely to be a good photographer, but he must also be an artist, and know something of the relation of the tints on the canvas to each other, and of their respective actinic values. A good photograph of a good painting is "a thing of beauty," and it is a pity that artists do not recognise this more than they do. A good series of reproductions in carbon at moderate prices would, we feel persuaded, be a remunerative speculation. Indeed, we do not see why engravings of pictures should not be reproduced by the zincographic process and sold at a cheap rate. If Messrs. Brooks, Graves, Virtue, and others would only undertake this, we should hear no more of pirated prints. Those who care for the high-priced and full-sized engraving would still be able to purchase it, while the million would have the opportunity of securing a smaller-sized reproduction for a sum within their means.

Photography and the Victoria Docks Extension.—Photography is now the indispensable companion of engineering. It has been largely used in securing representations of the various stages of the work in connection with the Victoria Docks Extension. Its final task was to photograph the bed of the entrance dock immediately after the first entrance of the water. The *Times*, in referring to the circumstance, said, "The photographer is to the engineer what the shorthand-writer is to the Law Courts," a very happy comparison.