

The Photographic News, June 4, 1880.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN AND OUT OF THE STUDIO.

PROPORTION IN SIZES OF PICTURES—ON THE REGISTRATION OF THE CHEMICAL ACTION OF DAYLIGHT—AN UNEXPECTED CAUSE OF FOG IN GELATINE PLATES—GELATINE TISSUE.

Proportion in Sizes of Pictures.—As we have pointed out from time to time, there is a growing tendency to alter the proportion of the sizes of photographs, and we have had at intervals the carte, the cabinet, the boudoir, and now the panel size introduced, and it becomes a question as to which has most perfect shape artistically rendered. There is no doubt that some proportions are more beautiful than others, and if we take that which is least pleasing to the eye it is the perfect square, since the eye readily detects the ratio. A double square, again, is better than the square—that is, it is more satisfactory that the ratio of one side to the other should be two to one than one to one; but the effect will be more pleasing if the proportion be, say, five to eight. In other words, proportions should be multiples of some simple unit, and yet of such a nature that they cannot readily ascertain what those multiples are. A very favourite size for a landscape is a plate 8½ in. by 6½ in., which is really the ratio of 17 to 13; but when a print is cut down, the proportion is usually 8 to 6—that is, 4 to 3—which is a very simple proportion, and one which to the eye is not altogether easy to make out. 8 to 5 would be a still better proportion, though for certain subjects which have to be taken with the longest size vertical, the horizontal breadth might be considered a trifle too narrow. The carte, as mounted, has the proportion of about 3½ to 2½, or 14 to 9, which, on the same rules, is a size which satisfies the eye; and so we might go on. But another point that requires attention is that the proportion should be such that there is no mental unconscious endeavour to cut the picture into squares, and to guess how much is over after forming these squares. Sometimes we have a tendency to do this, very much as a sick man in bed, whose eyes are always on the walls, has a desire to make the patterns of the wall-paper run into lines and form monstrosities. The mental efforts in the two cases are probably very similar, and the effect on the mind is the same. At any rate, the size of a picture should never seem to invite these mental problems.

On the Registration of the Chemical Action of Daylight.—Dr. Angus Smith lately read a paper before the Royal Society on the registration of the chemical action of daylight by means of the exposure of a slightly acidulated solution of iodide of potassium in water. Such a preparation when left in the dark remains perfectly colourless, but when brought out into daylight discolours, owing to the liberation of iodine. This takes place more or less rapidly, according to the intensity of the daylight. The iodine he estimates by the volumetric method, with hyposulphite of soda or other analogous means, and so at any interval is able to estimate the intensity of the incident light. This is not the first time that this method has been proposed—in fact, we only recently heard of it in another quarter, and its utility seems rather doubtful when so many other means are at hand. It is simply out of the question to use it for meteorological purposes, since the tediousness of the estimation of the liberated iodine would prevent its adoption at any station, except one which might chance to have a staff of supernumeraries. Again, another objection is that it only registers at long intervals of time, and that therefore it will not give an accurate quantitative measure of actinism for a whole day. Even Roscoe's instrument is deficient in this respect, as, we believe, it only makes a hourly registration. What we want is an automatic arrangement, which registers on

a drum or cylinder the actinic power of daylight in a similar way to that in which the barometer or variation of the magnet is registered at Greenwich or Kew. Looking back a few months we find in Mr. Warnerke's paper the foundation of a process by which this can be accomplished, and it only needs some active-minded individual to take it in hand.

An Unexpected Cause of Fog in Gelatine Plates.—Recently, while out with our camera on a windy day, we exposed some half dozen gelatine plates on a variety of subjects, amongst which were two views of foliage taken with a single landscape lens, in which there were rotating stops. Though only two or three seconds were required to produce full exposure, yet, probably, to get that, we had to wait a quarter-of-an-hour with the front of the slide pulled out and the cap on the lens. On developing the plates at home, we were surprised to find that the whole of the negatives were excellent and bright, excepting these particular two, which were veiled to a very considerable extent. Many were the conjectures formed regarding the cause of fog, and it was only by accident that we found the reason of it. We replaced the cap on the lens, put on the cap, and examined the inside of the camera with a focussing cloth over our head, and were surprised to find that the stops were illuminated—feebly, it is true, but still sufficiently to fog a gelatine plate. Here, then, was the cause of our disaster, and to take care that it shall not recur, we have glued a piece of black cloth against the stop, and made it light-tight. Of course a black cloth over the aperture in which the rotating stop is placed would have sufficed, but this would be moveable; whereas, by the small artifice employed, no want of memory will ever be the cause of a faulty negative. With the old wet process, or any other dry process, the small infiltration of light was quite unimportant, but as matters now stand it is much more serious. The views we tried to obtain were such as we should never have attempted on a windy day with the old slow plates, as it would have been impossible in anything like moderate time to have secured adequate exposure. It is seldom, however, that in the most gusty day two or three seconds cannot be found in which the lull is sufficient to cause foliage to be tolerably still.

Gelatine Tissue.—We have heard rumours, though we cannot answer for their correctness, that gelatine emulsion has been successfully applied to long strips of collodionized paper in such a manner as to allow the film to be separated and transferred to glass after development, in a very similar manner to that adopted by Mr. Warnerke in his collodion emulsion tissue. We hope, for the benefit of photography, that such is the case. We cannot imagine anything more delightful than to take a roll of such paper in the field, and so to be perfectly free from the weight of the glass plates, slides, or changing box, which encumber the walk of a pedestrian. It will be a grand day for the Alpine climbers if what we hear be true, and we may expect many subjects to be obtained which have previously been impracticable.

ABOUT GELATINE PLATES.

BY FOCUS, JUNR.

WHILE so much is being ably written and said about the theory of gelatine emulsion, would not a little further attention to the practice of the process be commendable? Doubtless a great many very valuable experiments and discoveries are being made by our photo-chemists, for which we poor knights of the camera are to be truly thankful; but there seems to me a good amount of the "grass growing, and the horse meanwhile starving," about the business.

I know of three different photographers who, some time