

The Photographic News, October 1, 1880.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN AND OUT OF THE STUDIO.

THE AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHIC CONVENTION—PHOTOGRAPHS IN NATURAL COLOURS AGAIN—ASPHALTUM PHOTOGRAPHS—A PHOTOGRAPHIC SPECULATION.

The American Photographic Convention.—Our American friends are ahead of us in the patronage and publicity which they give to the photographic art. Would any of the illustrated papers in London think it worth while to give an engraving of the *soiree* in connection with the Photographic Exhibition to-morrow? We fancy not. In America, however, the *New York Daily Graphic* finds the Convention of the National Photographers' Association at Chicago of sufficient importance and of sufficient interest to the general public, not only to present a full-page illustration of the gathering to its readers, but to give a portrait of the Secretary into the bargain. From the representation given in the *Graphic* the gathering must have been large, and the pictures exhibited numerous, though, probably, when allowances have been made for the imagination of the artist, not more so in either case than the annual assembly in Pall Mall East. Of Mr. Copelin (Secretary) the *Daily Graphic* says, among other complimentary things:—"He is imbued with the true scientific spirit, and, unlike some of his brethren, he regards the illustrated newspaper as his ally instead of a rival, as he very eloquently and tersely told the Convention when he announced to them the fact that the *Graphic* would give illustrations of their doings. The *Graphic*, he said, more than the slow weekly illustrated papers, took an interest in photography and in the welfare of photographers. He urged all present to send views of important occurrences to the *Graphic*, as he had done for years. In fact, he spoke of the *Graphic* in terms which the *Graphic* is too modest to reproduce. The members of the Convention agreed to furnish the *Graphic* with all the photographs of everything worth illustrating in its pages, and by unanimous action the *Graphic* was made the illustrated organ of the National Photographers' Association of America." This, no doubt, is one for Mr. Copelin, and two for the *Daily Graphic*; but it nevertheless furnishes a peg on which to hang a moral. In England the complaint is not that photographers do not take notice of the illustrated papers, but rather that the illustrated papers ignore the photographer. In the matter of portraiture, especially, there are hosts of pictures reproduced every year from photographs—the artist, in many cases, finding it unnecessary to alter the pose or the lighting—in which not the slightest notice is taken of the originator. This, we contend, is not fair to the photographer who may have spent time and thought over his picture, sees it slavishly copied (and in not a few instances spoilt), and yet receives no acknowledgment. How many of the portraits of the new House of Commons which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* were copied from photographs, and the originals never even seen, and in how many was the assistance afforded by the photographer recognized? In painfully few instances, we fancy, was the latter the case. This, surely, is not fair!

Photographs in Natural Colours Again.—At last the problem is solved! Photographs in natural colours, a German chemist—it is always a German or an American chemist who makes these marvellous discoveries—has found out, can be produced very easily; indeed, so easily, that it is a wonder no one thought of the process before. This is "how it's done," and please bear in mind, as our friend the conjurer would add, "there is no deception." All you have to do is to spread the "chemical composition" of the German chemist on the surface of a mirror, and give the back part of the latter a coating of oil. The mirror thus prepared is held before the person who is to be photographed. The oil coating evaporates, and the likeness of the person remains in natural colours on the surface. "The image so fixed is brought into a bath, and

is exposed for a half hour in the sunlight before it is ready for delivery." Wonderful! But what a pity it is that the modesty of this German chemist has induced him to keep his name and address so carefully concealed! We are burning to know something more of this "extraordinary chemical composition," and of this equally extraordinary oil which evaporates and assists in forming the picture. To the ordinary photographic mind this "oil" bears as much relation to the "chemical composition" as Tenterden Stæple does to the Goodwin Sands; but then, in a process which produces photographs in natural colours, everything is possible.

Asphaltum Photographs.—Does anybody know anything of an improved preparation of asphaltum which has lately come under our notice? The process is thus described. A suitable kind of asphaltum must be chosen; when powdered it must be a deep chocolate without any tinge of yellow; it must not be soluble to any extent in turpentine, and its melting point must be as high as possible, at all events not lower than boiling water point. A tolerably strong solution of it must be made in chloroform in a good sized flask. When it is dissolved, three times its volume of ether is added, and the whole well shaken; the solution is then allowed to stand for two days. The ether precipitates the sensitive material of the asphaltum, and this deposit is collected on a filter, thoroughly dried in the dark, and then dissolved again in benzol. On evaporating upon a plate of glass it leaves a film highly sensitive to the action of light. The image is developed with oil of turpentine and subsequent washing with spirit. In the production of etching on glass, inscriptions on metal by the etching process, as well as for design rollers, the sensitive film of asphaltum as a protective coating may always be used with advantage. Mr. Morch has succeeded recently in obtaining by means of this process transparent positives for the lantern; these were copies of the illustrations of various books of travel, and they were found to be specially adapted for this kind of reproduction, on account of their sharp outline. In preparing the sensitive asphaltum for photographic purposes it would be well, perhaps, to separate all the carbonate of lime it usually contains by means of hydrochloric acid before the other treatment. Such are the details as they have been handed to us. We know nothing practically of the working of the process, nor do we know Mr. Morch or Dr. Keyser, the two gentlemen whose names are connected with the experiments. The particulars are certainly curious, and it would be worth while, perhaps, to have some more information on the subject.

A Photographic Speculation.—Here is a warning to fashionable photographers who have a speciality for taking the likenesses of singers, actors, and other public characters. A well-known French baritone had his portrait taken by an equally well-known French photographer, with the object of selling the copies, and being a good-looking fellow he thought he saw his way to make some money. But, unfortunately, notwithstanding his good looks, the public refused to speculate, and the gross of cartes remained unsold. Now, whether the undertaking was a joint speculation on the part of singer and photographer we are unable to say, but the vocalist refused to pay for the unsold copies, and the photographer has accordingly commenced an action against him to recover the money. Of course the whole thing turns upon the terms of the agreement, and should it happen that the photographer has at any time agreed to incur any risk, he will not recover. Any way, the circumstances furnish a hint to those whom it may concern.

A NEW IDEA FOR BACKGROUNDS.

BY L. W. SEAVEY.*

I AM sorry to announce to you, ladies and gentlemen, that I shipped from New York a very large box containing some accessories which I had prepared expressly for introduction at this Convention. These cases have not arrived, and I shall

* Read at the Chicago Convention.