

The Photographic News, December 10, 1880.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN AND OUT OF THE STUDIO LONDON FOG AND PHOTOGRAPHY—A NEW METHOD OF PRODUCING BACKGROUNDS—THE QUEKETT MICROSCOPICAL SOCIETY.

London Fog and Photography.—Photographers should be greatly interested in the fog and smoke question which has been lately brought before the public as though it were a perfect novelty. Scientific men may talk as they will, but it is greatly to be feared that we shall have the fog, like the poor, always with us. Abolish smoke, abolish even fires, and London would yet have its mists, though not, perhaps, the yellow, stinging "London particular." The winter time is really a serious and an anxious time for London photographers. If one could afford it, the most satisfactory way would be to close the studio for four or five months, and recruit oneself at Torquay or Madeira for the busy season when the photographer has no peace. But this, of course, is impossible, and the next best alternative is the artificial light. The wonderful success of Mr. Swan's electric lamp shown at the Society of Telegraph Engineers a few evenings since makes one look to him as the man who will come to the photographer's rescue. We suggested, immediately after the announcement of his improved lamp at his lecture at Newcastle, that he should demonstrate the powers of the lamp at the Photographic Society. We still hold to this suggestion, and would go further. Why not make the demonstration a photographic one? An easily-worked electric light, soft and yet brilliant, as Mr. Swan's appears to be, is what photographers want. How heartily welcomed such a demonstration would be, goes without saying. Practical photographer as Mr. Swan is, ever keeping an eye upon anything which can advance the art, he could not have rested contented without trying the applicability of his lamp to photographic portraiture, and must have a good deal to say on the subject which would be worth hearing. If photographers could be only made independent of fog and smoke, what an immense boon it would be! As Mr. Swan's lamp is capable of producing a light equal to sixty candles, though he is contented with one equal to thirty candles, this ought to answer all purposes.

A New Method of Producing Backgrounds.—An American paper has unearthed a novelty, which it heads with the appropriate title of "new." The journal in question says something new in the way of photographic background is announced. It is based on a well-known "retouching" process—that pleasing method of manipulating the negative so that all unprepossessing features are toned down. By this new device for backgrounds no scene-shifting on the part of the operator is necessary. The victim is pinioned as usual, and the negative taken. The artist then "retouches" an appropriate background on the glass plate, which duly appears on the photograph. Backgrounds can thus be put in to suit the taste. A young lady with a talent for sketching can draw a pretty piece of scenery, and the photographer can have her picture taken with the sketch as a background. Those who have pictures of their old homes can be photographed standing in front of the ancient residence, and school girls can pose nicely before their academies, and learned graduates before their colleges. In fact, this new wrinkle is capable of many transformations, and will, no doubt, be the rage for a while. The method, however, is not so novel as the writer supposes. This way of putting in backgrounds is a very old one, and has been worked with more or less success—generally less. Clouds in landscapes are the most effective things which have yet been done in the way of working on negatives, but even these require more technical skill than is usually possessed by "a young lady with a talent for sketching."

The Quekett Microscopical Society.—The President of the Photographic Society must have been intensely amused at the annual dinner of the Quekett Microscopical Society, at which he was present on Saturday week. There is some difficulty, it appears, in editing the Royal Microscopical Society's Journal, as the active Fellows of the Society formed two distinct parties—those who thought the Journal should be devoted to the microscope proper, and those who thought its pages were better occupied with the applications of the microscope to natural history. The supporters of the latter dubbed their opponents as the "brass and glass" party, while the natural history amateurs had been politely designated as the "slug and bug" party. Mr. Crisp, the junior Secretary, upon whom the task of editing the Society's Journal fell, observed, in responding to the toast of "The Royal Microscopical and Kindred Societies," that the "brass and glass" men yawned terribly whenever points of anatomy were being discussed; while, when the other side had its innings, and exhibited or described new forms of stands and apparatus, the "slugs and bugs" could hardly restrain their impatience. This statement was received with great laughter, only increased when Mr. Crisp went on gravely to refer to himself personally as a "brass and glass" man, whilst he ventured to regard the senior Secretary (the chairman of the evening) as a type of a "slug and bug" man. What a charmingly happy family the Royal Microscopical Society must be, and how Mr. Glaisher must congratulate himself upon the fact that the Society of which he is President has not yet divided itself into "wet" men and "dry." Not but what a little humour thrown in now and then would not altogether spoil the somewhat solemn debates of the Photographic Society of Great Britain.

The City and Guilds of London Institute and Photography.—The City and Guilds of London Institute is doing much to remove from the City companies the reproach that they spent their money only in feasting, and were indifferent to the objects for which they were founded. It may be said that they are now going beyond these objects, as we have never heard of the Photographers' Company, and yet photography is one of the subjects which the Institute fosters. The questions for the examinations to be held in May have been issued, and those who intend going up had better lose no time in joining the Wednesday evening classes which were commenced in October, and are now being continued at Gresham House. The prospectus states that students in these classes should chiefly devote themselves to the study of spectrum photography, and of emulsion processes, so that poor collodion would appear to have been completely shelved. It must be confessed, however, that the money's worth is given, since the fee of five shillings the term is all that is asked for a lecture every week lasting two hours and a half. Who would not learn something about theoretical photography for so small an expenditure?

At Home.

THE PLATINOTYPE COMPANY AT BROMLEY ROAD.

AS on former occasions, there has this year been a good deal of discussion over the medal awards at the Pall Mall Exhibition. But, however much the deserts of this or that fortunate recipient have been called into question, unanimity appears to exist on one point, that the medal awarded to the Platinotype Company is thoroughly well deserved. The beautiful reproduction by Mr. F. Hollyer of a work of Mr. Burne Jones, the "Marble Hall" of Mr. Manfield, a masterpiece of interior work, the woodland studies and landscape pictures, which together afforded abundant proof of what platinotype can do, constituted, this year, one of