

ported from manufacturers of the highest eminence, which, while perfect in every other respect, was defective as regards the ghost. As the result of careful testing in a temporary tube, it became apparent that a cure could be effected by shortening the tube about an eighth of an inch, which was done without its flatness of field being impaired in any discoverable degree.

The most perfect mount for lenses of this class would be that in which the privilege was afforded the user of making an adjustment to suit work of any nature by the separation of the lenses to a very limited extent, so as to be used under the most perfect conditions for the special work in hand. With a lens of about eleven inches focus, a sliding adjustment of half an-inch has been adopted with beneficial results.

### THE DIGNITY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ART.

BY E. L. WILSON.

BEFORE I can say much for the dignity of photography, I must, I suppose, establish the fact that photography is an art, and that its productions may be justly considered as works of art.

I must, I suppose, use somebody's artistic measuring rod as my standard. I will choose one of the sort that is popular among painters, and one whose honesty cannot be questioned.

During the past winter it was my privilege to listen to a very learned talk by the distinguished orator, Monsignor Capel. His topic was, "How to look at pictures." He began by explaining his understanding of what "Art" meant, and then tried to reveal its rules, and to explain how to understand whether a picture was or was not painted according to the said rules. He maintained that art does not consist in simply representing the person or scene as it is, as photographers and low grade artists attempt to do. "Many think a likeness, or an illusion, to be the first thing in art; but," said the rev. orator, "illusion is not art. Instantaneous photography pictures you just as you are, but this is not art. A photograph can never be a work of art, though it may be artistic. And this is true of a painted portrait. It may have form, feature, colour, and be true as to every detail of face, hair, body, &c., and yet it may in no sense be a work of art. You ask me, then, in what does art consist? A French author has answered the question for us, in saying that 'style is the man.'"

This may illustrate what I mean by art. The portrait painter of the first order does not represent upon canvas the form, figure, and appearance of the subject, but he studies the life, temperament, and character of the one he desires to paint, and fills himself full of the ideal man; and this he forms out in living thought, and so his picture is a representation of his own conception, a creation of what he has conceived the person to be. A second or third rate artist, however, will not produce a picture that is lifelike, though he may delineate carefully, and particularize every detail. Furthermore, declared the learned orator, and with consummate truth in every work of art, the mind of the painter must be so expressed that we discern both the thought and the style of the artist. And in order to appreciate properly the work of the great masters, we must place ourselves in their position, and endeavour to possess ourselves of the great thoughts which were in their minds. Raphael never painted but to get faith in a dogma. In Titian's famous compositions we could always discover the effort to secure sympathy between the figures and nature.

And thus far only did our orator reveal to his audience the rules of art, not advancing one thought as to the rules and forms of composition, or of chiaroscuro.

I maintain, in face of all his arguments, in face of his assertion that "a work of art is a conception, but that a photograph is only a likeness," that a photograph can be both, while a painting is very rarely both.

During my work at the World's Exhibition last winter I had no sky-light; but when people came to me for likenesses, I asked them out in the beautiful park, by the lake, or near the rustic bridge, or beneath the moss-hung live oaks, and there, in groups of my own conception, arranged them agreeably to the rules of art as I had studied them, and made a likeness of the whole conception.

Monsignor Capel, though he may be a fair amateur painter, and a clever amateur photographer, need not leave his own native England to discover some grand works of art in the conceptions of H. P. Robinson, of Tunbridge Wells, painter and photographer, likeness maker and artist "in every sense."

When we look at a picture, we should become *one with it*. It

will talk to us, and we may talk to it. We first examine lines, its light and shade, and decide whether or not the rules of art are complied with. And then we endeavour to discover the conception of the artist, and study out to what extent he has secured what he attempted.

How often have we seen the same subject treated in widely different ways, by various painters; how piously photographers will pose and light the same person.

The moment I look upon a photograph which approaches a work of art, I involuntarily begin to measure it by the rules to give it as to the intention of the "likeness" taken who produced it, just as surely as I do when I am feasting in a gallery of paintings.

And now, having, as I believe, established the claims of photography to a place among the arts, what, may I ask, do we understand by the dignity of our art? I maintain that it is that element which consists in its being thoroughly believed in, respected, and sustained by those who practise it. That its dignity is commensurate with the amount of dignity thus imparted to it by the parties mentioned, in the ways mentioned, and by the quality of work which they produce by its help. I need not add even a partial list of its accomplishments in order to maintain its dignity. We all know how the stars are caught by its aid as they whirl through space; how the pale-faced moon is mapped for us; how the mysteries of the ages are revealed; how science is helped by it; how art and industry employ it as a right-hand workman; how it brings the beauties of the world to every door; how it gives the most truthful representation possible of "the human face divine;" how it almost creates.

With all its works and ways we are familiar, they alone would uphold its dignity beyond all question if those who practised it do their duty just as well. That, alas! I fear they do not. It seems to me that I never knew an artist to hold so low a position in the public estimation as it does now. It seems to have become so cheapened as to have scarcely any market at all.

The idea seems to be growing that photographs cost nothing to produce, and the ignorant patron cannot, or will not, regard one quality of productions worth more than another. He holds that because he sees cheap prints hawked about the streets, that good ones cannot cost any more, and the artist photographer must argue his cause every time he asks a living price for his work. This is indignity, and not dignity.

### A PORTABLE SUPPORT FOR WASHING GELATINE PLATES.

BY W. M. ASHMAN.

STARTING with a plate fresh from the fixing bath, we have a skin of gelatine swelled to its full extent with an aqueous solution of sodium thio-sulphate, and possibly plus a portion of the double silver and sodium thio-sulphate salt. The former we know to be soluble in water, and the latter is only soluble in an excess of the first named. For this reason it is customary for us to allow our negatives to remain a longer time in the fixing bath than is necessary to dissolve out the visible silver bromide.

From this skin we desire to remove all traces of the fixing salt, leaving it swelled with water or other suitable liquid, free from chemical contaminations of a harmful nature. The question then arises, which is the easiest and, at the same time, the most expeditious method of bringing this state of things about? Obviously the plan of placing a negative film uppermost at the bottom of a vessel of water has little to recommend it, for, as everybody knows, a stagnant pool is not the best place to cleanse anything. Another plan, that of passing a stream of water over the surface, possesses advantages, as we know, over the last named, but the stream needs to run a long time before there would be sufficient dilution to permit complete removal of the salts from the under surface.

Soaking plates in vessels fitted with vertical grooves is an improvement upon the foregoing, but the plan, although in general use in Europe, does not reach theoretical perfection, neither can a greater number of plates be washed in the same space than by the method I desire to bring under your notice.

All fixing salt eliminators, except alcohol and water, have a destructive influence upon gelatine, which renders their employment a matter of some delicacy, and unfit for general commercial application; therefore, unless we discover some other specific, we must be satisfied to employ dilute alcohol or water for the