

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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THE STORAGE AND PACKAGE OF NEGATIVES.

Now that the photographic season, so far as landscape work is concerned, is on the wane, the careful worker will do well to consider the best way to preserve the negatives which, during its short continuance, have been added to his store. It is true that the past season, on account of its trying climatic vagaries, has not been so productive as many of us might have wished, but all the same, a certain number of negatives have been secured by most workers, and it behoves them to adopt the best means of preserving them for future use, if they are worthy of such an attention.

Although we cannot endorse the opinion of certain old-fashioned photographers, that gelatine negatives can never equal those produced in *their* time by the wet process, we are quite willing to concede the point that wet-plate negatives are not liable to that swift deterioration which is apt to overtake their modern representatives in gelatine if preventive measures be neglected. Everyone knows that a gelatine negative, if left unheeded on a shelf or elsewhere, exposed to the gamut of atmospheric changes with which we are favoured in this climate, will quickly show signs of impending dissolution. If it has never been varnished, its case is from the first almost hopeless. Spots with a metallic sheen around them quickly appear, or, possibly, the entire film assumes a pale yellow tone, which will yield but a ghost of a print. Varnish of good quality is a wonderful preservative, and if this varnish should be applied on a basis of plain collodion, or be mixed with the collodion before application, as recently recommended by Mr. A. L. Henderson, we may say that every precaution has been taken to ensure permanency so far as the film itself is concerned.

The method of storing negatives must naturally accommodate itself to the business requirements of the owner. Where negatives may be required at any moment for printing from, it is essential that they be easily accessible, so that no time is lost in searching for them. In a large establishment, where an immense

business is done for the trade, we have seen the negatives stored in grooved shelves, each groove having its distinctive number. There is no objection to such a plan provided that the place of storage is kept perfectly dry, for it is evident that the air must circulate between the plates thus stored, and moist air under such conditions would be capable of harm. In many respects, this method is preferable to the storage of negatives in grooved boxes, from which receptacles we have taken forgotten negatives which were covered with mildew, and spotted all over beyond redemption. When the negatives are comparatively few in number, we know of no better plan than to store them in the original plate boxes as received from the maker. Every negative should be well varnished, and packed face to face with its fellows, a piece of clean, soft paper of the same size being placed between each pair of films. Then, if the original cardboard box be thoroughly dried by heat before the negatives are placed in it, and if, finally, the packed box is put in a tin case—like those recently introduced by Messrs. Wratten and Wainwright—there need be no fear that the negatives will spoil.

But perhaps the most fruitful source of spoilt negatives is not gradual deterioration, but the hopeless smash which so often is the direct result of sending one through the post or by ordinary carrier. We have many a time received a negative upon which the owner has desired an opinion, and the only one which we have been able to give is the opinion that it arrived in too many fragments for critical examination. Of course the poor postman or carrier is the scape-goat, and all the blame is cast upon his rough handling and stupidity. But it is hardly fair that this should be so, for, truth to tell, the mischief has arisen almost invariably from the method of packing. In one case, the glass negative was sent to us in an ordinary dark slide packed in paper, and the vibration of a long railway journey was too much for it. In other cases, the glasses have been actually sent to us through the post in ordinary envelopes, and have naturally been starved