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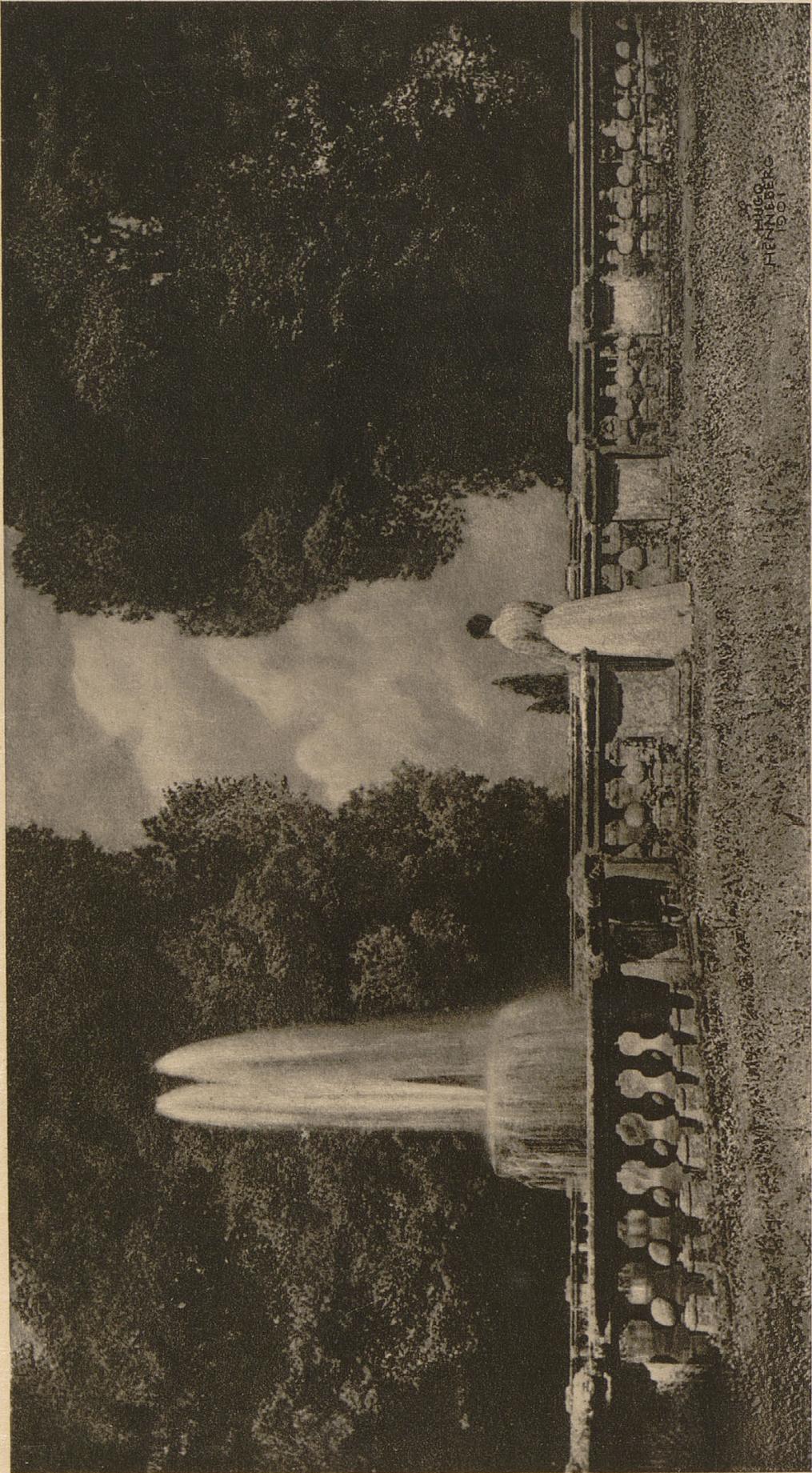
PLATES

HUGO HENNEBERG.

- I. Villa Falconieri.
- II. Villa Torlonia.
- III. Pomeranian Motif.



HUGO
HENSCHKE
1920



50
HUBER
HUBBERG
1901



HUGO
HENNEBERG
1902

HEINRICH KÜHN

- IV. Roman Campagna.
- V. Girl with Mirror.
- VI. A Study in Sunlight.
- VII. Washerwoman on the Dunes.



HENRICH
KUEHN

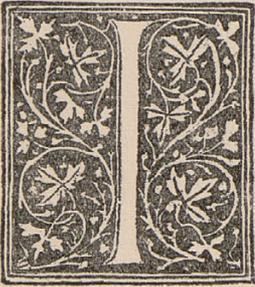






HENRICH
KUEHN

HUGO HENNEBERG—HEINRICH KÜHN—HANS
WATZEK



It is one of the ironies of fate that she frequently permits persons of merely mediocre ability to become instrumental in spreading new ideas by blending the strange and new with the old and familiar, and by administering this mixture to the public in slowly increasing doses, the public thus taking in a diluted form the wine which in its pure state was too strong for it. This thought, which was originally applied to the development of modern literature, is equally true of the growth of artistic photography. Without passing through any transition stages, beginners frequently employ new technical means or copy outward appearances which to them seem "artistic," and immediately believe that they have placed themselves in a class with those they imitate. All our exhibitions, as well as our illustrated periodicals, furnish abundant proof of this tendency. In artistic photography the "*Mache*" is everything. It is not artistic expression but artistic appearance that the amateur photographer strives for. Like the untutored theater-goer, he admires the virtuoso, not the poet.

It is not surprising that even those exhibitions of artistic photography which are distinguished by the high standard of the exhibits, as were those of Dresden in 1904, of Vienna and Berlin in 1905, are not as successful as one would expect. The visitors have not been properly prepared for the contrasts to other exhibitions, and hence do not understand them. Among the German, English, French, and American exhibitors there are hardly a dozen artists who see clearly, have a thorough command of the technical means, and are capable of recognizing and bringing out the essential points in a picture; while, on the other hand, there are hundreds of amateurs who acquire whatever can be learned, and, for the mere praise it brings, employ their new acquirements to deck out in a "modern" garb their views, their sweet portraits and favorite landscapes. In such a situation no one can separate the chaff from the wheat, except those of the initiated who are at the same time craftsmen enough to understand the technical part of the work, and critics capable of discerning the relative importance of things. Criticism can do more good and more harm than people generally believe. Our one great daily paper whose utterances are entitled to some consideration has not treated the offerings of the artistic photographers in an objective and serious manner. It is regrettable that in many cases this paper should have bestowed upon mediocre talents an amount of praise which ought to be reserved only for the masters of the art; while, as a matter of fact, it hardly noticed the latter class. It has allowed itself to be misled by appearances and by accidentals, which in many cases are not all due to any conscious effort on the part of the amateur, and it has mistaken them for intended results. Such errors, however, might easily be avoided if the journal were

to make an effort to familiarize itself with the history of artistic photography and its exponents, and would acquire the necessary knowledge to enable it to discuss intelligently the technical questions and the craftsman's side of the work.

Recent criticism is chiefly directed against the tendency to attain purely painter-like effects through photography, or, as has been said, "one photographer seeks to imitate the 'Warpsweder' painters, another to copy Terborch, while the third tries to produce a sketchy background like Koner." Such a view is not without its justification, for we can not boast of great progress if we find photographers, with a certain amount of talent for drawing, imitating effects of pencil-drawings, etchings, or reproductions of paintings. In its highest perfection photography remains a distinct branch of art, whose means of expression are entirely different from those employed by painters. Even if, instead of giving a mere literal transcript of reality, the photographer would reproduce the effect of nature upon the spectator by giving due consideration to line, tone, and distribution of light and dark in space, he is by no means compelled to resort to the painter's medium of expression. After all, such an attempt involves merely the solution of technical questions, even though it requires the guidance of an artistic conception. On the other hand, the critics unjustly object to a good many effects—as, for instance, certain chiaroscuro ones—as being painter-like, which they would find perfectly legitimate if they were to approach them from the standpoint of the photographer. Like sculpture, poetry, and music, photography can be found only on its own peculiar paths, and it is only by traveling those paths that criticism can be fair, or that it can aid the photographer and remove misunderstandings and abuses.

I have spoken of the mediocre photographers, who unconsciously copy outward appearances and then pose as rivals of those they imitate. I do not know the extent to which this phenomenon exists in other countries, since my acquaintance with foreign photographers is confined to the capable ones among them. In Germany and Austria, however, the trouble is very prevalent. Ten years ago they copied the silvery gray platinotypes of the English photographers; now Kühn and Henneberg are the models; tomorrow they will be imitating the Americans. All of which shows that photography is in most cases not practiced by artists. For the work of the artist is altogether original and independent. It shows that artistic photography, so-called, is chiefly the work of dilettanti; for the work of the dilettante consists in finding out how a thing is to be done—in imitating. The dilettante knows no limitations imposed by an artistic individuality. He considers himself equal to all tasks, and is the slave of fashion.

At the end of the eighties there was great activity in the Vienna Camera Club, well known even abroad. Those days abounded with animated debates for and against unsharpness, for and against the pinhole-camera, the monocle, self-prepared papers, *plein air* effects, and the conception of nature of the modern Munich and Paris painters. They were the best days of the Club, the days of rising talents and of the most brilliant

development ever experienced by such an organization. The first international photographic exhibition, which took place in 1891, and in which the élite of the Linked Ring took part, making a great impression with their exhibits, came to be an event of the greatest importance for a number of the members of that Club. Our first important information about Professor Hans Watzek takes us back to that exhibition. The results shown by the pictures of the English photographer, Maskell, led him to take up the pin-hole-camera, which he soon after supplemented by the use of an ordinary spectacle-lens or "monocle." At first he used the refracted ray of a lens stopped down with very small diaphragms, as well as the diffused ray of the non-achromatic spectacle-lens, achieving thereby a softness of line and breadth of treatment previously unknown. He constructed a special camera of his own; was the first one to work in very large sizes; used bromide paper for the making of these large negatives; employed concentrated solutions in developing, "which he mixed, like a cook, according to his own instincts"; discarded entirely the glossy papers then in general use; sensitized his own water-color paper—in short, he played with the difficulties of photographic technique.

It would lead us too far to refer to all his experiments and to mention all his writings and publications which brought the news of the progress of his work. It was, however, of special importance that his indefatigable efforts brought him two friends who for over a decade shared with him the labor of carrying forward the evolution of pictorial photography. These friends were Hugo Henneberg of Vienna, and Heinrich Kühn of Dresden, who had then been compelled, by poor health, to seek the climate of Innsbruck. A few suggestive experiments of the Frenchman, Robert Demachy, with a half-buried and discredited process, bichromate of gum, attracted the attention of our "Trifolium": Kühn, Henneberg, Watzek. They mastered this process in every sense, and developed it by endless experiments, the value of which, at that time, they themselves hardly realized; but these led to the invention of the multiple gum-print employed by the Austro-German photographers, which is, in my estimation, the most important printing process at present at the disposal of the artists amongst the photographers.

It is impossible, even approximately, to reproduce in a picture, the scale of tones which we observe in nature. The contrast between the purest white and the deepest velvet-black in a well-lighted picture is not nearly so great as that between a rock flooded by sunlight and the shadows of the forest. It is merely the relation of the intervals of light and color that can be reproduced. Photography does not give a true picture of nature as it appears. Unimportant and trifling details are emphasized, while the impression of the whole is almost entirely lost. For the picture shows both the shadows and warm tones black and opaque. A photograph taken in the sun shows no trace of local tone, softness, breadth, unity, or even harmony. The facility with which photographers are enabled to give the smallest and most unimportant details with wonderful accuracy is very seductive, and is the great obstacle in the way of the employment of photography as a means

of artistic expression. So much value has been placed upon the reproduction of such details and upon the obtaining of sharp outlines, rendered possible by the camera, that the suggestion to sacrifice these qualities for the sake of obtaining a harmonious pictorial effect or the expression of a particular mood usually evokes a smile of pity. But the photographic reproduction of details is as little artistic as a detailed copy of nature by a painter would be. The aim of the artist is to recreate the impression which the aspect of nature produced upon him. This requires the well-considered suppression of details and the toning down of hard and sharp lines. We see far more detail in nature than is possible to put into a picture, and no painter has ever attempted to paint the leaves of a tree, the blades of grass in a field, and the hair of a beard as minutely as he actually saw them. The reason for this is, on the one hand, the impossibility of crowding too much detail into the reduced space of a picture, and, on the other hand, it would tire the painter. Besides, the beholder would not understand these details, since he sees them in one plane, and not, as in reality, in space. This also explains why even the ordinary landscapes, notwithstanding their objective correctness, do not make a deeper impression. Without any attempt at selection they crowd the space of the picture with details which, appearing in one plane, can not produce an intelligible effect.

To give the true relation between the several intervals in light and color, to soften sharp lines and modify details in accordance with the impression, to obtain breadth and a unit of pictorial effect—were the problems to be solved by the pictorial photographer; and they were solved by the "Kleeblatt": Henneberg, Kühn, and Watzek. These problems, of course, were merely matters of photographic technique and of taste; difficulties which ultimately were bound to be solved by the artistically cultivated photographer, but which of themselves did not in any way belong to the domain of art. Such problems as those relating to "focus," "conception," "exposure," "developing," etc., are merely preparatory, and their solution could at best result in the production of a picturesque excerpt from nature. Greater deeds than that, however, are expected of art in photography. Of course, a real work of art should give us nature, but it must give us more than a mere clipping from nature, more than the picture which we all see with our natural eye. What we have a right to demand is the sublimated picture of nature, the creation of which requires the play of those powers which in the artist are superadded to the mere natural senses.

It is by this mental process that the artist evolves out of nature an art which still is of nature. Art is not nature, for it is a liberation from those conditions by which, under ordinary conditions, our consciousness of the visible world is bounded; and yet it is nature, for it is nothing else than the process whereby the visible appearance of nature is fixed, and is forced to reveal itself more and more clearly. The artist is compelled to deal both with nature and his material in order to create something new that is neither nature in the ordinary sense nor mere material. Nature and art—art and photography! There are very few, even among the initiated, who understand

the connection existing between these terms. To my mind photography is a species of technique, and technique is no art. Technique is a condition precedent. Art is the power to give expression to individual impression and conception—no matter by what means. Such coherent, expressive mood-pictures as Henneberg, Kühn, and Watzek have made must be designated as “developed nature-pictures,” the creation of which calls for the same activity which in the mind of the artist supplements the mere powers of observation and reproduction of the sense of sight. Take Henneberg’s “Villa Torlonia.” Is that mere nature, mere photography? Does it not contain enough of expression to make one forget the material? And is it possible for a mere reporter of nature to produce such a decided and harmonious effect? “Who amongst a thousand painters,” remarked a well-known German artist, “unhampered as they are by any limitations, could compose a picture as perfect as this, which Henneberg, seeing this piece of actual nature, created, although limited by reality.” And well may we admit that it is perfect artistically and technically. It presents to the cultivated eye the correct values of light and color. In detail and in softness it is adapted to the grand style. It shows large forms and correspondingly simple lines. The figure is placed with consummate taste. It is all nature, yet not nature in her nakedness. For it conveys to us the impression which the artist received in viewing this piece of nature. Henneberg felt that great things require serious expression; large masses require repose and simplicity. He suppressed everything that might impair this impressiveness.

Enough said: the beholder will arrive at the true enjoyment of the picture only by using his eyes. It does not detract from a good picture that different minds are differently impressed by it. Pictorial photography, like painting, is not a means to clearly express feelings or thoughts, but merely to inspire or suggest them. Again, how full of nature and feeling is the wonderful and famous picture of the “Villa Falconieri,” with its perfectly astonishing suggestion of Italian sunlight and its contrasting shadows. Of course, we must not forget that even these pictures are only photographs, simply caught with a hand-camera, developed, enlarged, and printed. But the photographer was an artist who used the photographic medium merely as a means to an end, who saw and felt, before he photographed, who did not forget the impression received in the view of nature, and who possessed the ability to exhaust all means to further his aim. One writer in discussing the gum-prints of the “Kleeblatt” criticized them as being too painterlike. It can not be denied that multiple printing occasionally gives to the picture a too heavy and even blotchy appearance. Numerous instances of this have been seen at the various exhibitions. But this defect, too, has been overcome by our three artists, as is shown by Henneberg’s “Pomeranian Motif,” which, with its warm light, produces a remarkably airy and sunny effect. We might add a large number of landscapes by Henneberg to the three just mentioned. There is an especial charm in his purely atmospheric “Stimmungs” pictures. But the specimens of his work here reproduced sufficiently prove him to be an extraordinary artist-photographer. By

continuous study and observation, by unceasing work and discussion with his two friends, he has brought to a fine development the gifts bestowed upon him by nature. With his charming pictures he has proved that the material is by no means the determining factor and that photography is a technique by means of which an artist may well produce works of art.

Amateurs are apt to say that they could produce just as good results if only they had the time and the expensive apparatus at the disposal of the artist-photographers. The example of the late Professor Hans Watzek is a fit reply to this complaint. He was a drawing-teacher in a school. Nevertheless he found time to devote to his photographic work. This shows what may be done if there is a strong enough desire. His apparatus again was of the simplest, for it was his theory that we must free ourselves from the tyranny of the material. He was one of the most striking figures among the artist-photographers, not only on account of his steadiness of purpose and his bold experiments, but also on account of the selection of his materials. To quote some of the characteristic remarks of Alfred Buschbeck, the former President of the Camera Club: "After seeing Maskell's pictures at the Vienna exposition of 1891, and without having any real apparatus, he commenced to experiment with the pinhole-camera, introducing, for the sake of obtaining shorter exposures, a spectacle-lens, which, under the name of 'monocle,' was destined to capture the world of pictorial photography. This striving to fall back upon first principles in every branch of technique, and to sacrifice the complicated for the sake of gaining freedom of individual expression, is characteristic of his entire work. His camera, constructed by himself, which he alone knew how to handle; his instantaneous shutters, one of which, popularly known as the 'sledgehammer,' each time threatened to smash the camera, evoked great hilarity among the members of the club. But the magnificent pictures which he produced with such primitive means show that artistic feeling and not ingenious apparatus are the basis of artistic production. His splendid life-size study-heads, which were the first to establish the value of the 'monocle' for that branch of our art, were taken with a camera consisting of a series of pasteboard boxes appropriately telescoped. A 'monocle' was inserted in the front side, and only the rear end was solidly backed for the plate-holder. A large cloth, used also as lens-cap, prevented the entrance of any stray rays. It certainly was not an easy matter to handle such a monstrosity; but it was of incalculable value, since it produced, for the first time, pictures not only distinguished by a wonderful softness of line, but also by their freedom from defects of perspective, due to the fact that they were taken with a sufficiently long focus. He likewise applied this principle of simplification to the chemical treatment of the plates and in the self-preparation of the paper. Instead of carefully weighing the crystals, he employed only concentrated solutions. For inquiries as to the composition and use of these solutions he had the reply, 'till you have enough': This playful manner of dealing with technical difficulties was the result of routine acquired through a most thorough study, and made it possible for him to treat each picture

individually, independently of recipes mechanically concocted and slavishly copied. He was a rare phenomenon among the amateurs in that he was equally efficient in landscape, portraiture, and still-life."

The reproductions in this magazine do not give a complete idea of Watzek's talent, for they do not include his colored work, which, notwithstanding certain defects, is very refined, a decided relief from the usual style of color-photography. Using the underlying principles of color-etching and lithography, in connection with Kühn and Henneberg, he attempted to obtain colored effects through multiple printing from several negatives, and through the employment of paper sensitized with different superimposed pigments. He also experimented with the three-color process in connection with gum-printing, endeavoring to produce pictorial effects. He realized, however, that this process involved much trouble, and that the results did not by any means fulfil his expectations. He was not the man to waste his energies on what seemed to him a hopeless task. As soon as he realized that a process with which he was experimenting would not lend itself to his aims, he would abandon it and search for another. And he never failed in his search. Even in his last days his mind was occupied with the idea of attaining light and airy "mood"-pictures. Among the pictures reproduced I would call special attention to the "White Sails." In our exhibitions we come across quantities of marine-pictures, but I know of none which has the charm of this photograph. Simple in composition and in its tones, remarkably delicate in its atmospheric effect and in its wealth and beauty of light, it is to my mind one of those photographs which prove beyond dispute the possibility of giving individual expression by means of photography. His "Tyrolese Farm" and "Poplars and Clouds" are the reflection of his education as a painter in Munich. They seem to have been evolved out of the dark. "It looks as though he had kept some of the famous 'Asphalt sauce' of those days and had applied it in photography. Both pictures are undoubtedly somewhat too heavy, but nevertheless they can be readily understood; that is to say, one immediately grasps what he intended to express. Of course, he intended to express such dark moods—but the danger of blotchiness and of the silhouette effect has not been entirely avoided. The pictures are interesting, but they might offer more to the eye; they tend to that quality which is sometimes criticized as "too painter-like." "Sheep" is another example of his endeavor, exhibited in "White Sails," to reproduce the correct values, the result being almost that of color. We feel the warm sun which rests upon the slope. It is another picture which deserves to be called perfect in composition, arrangement of masses and lines.

Heinrich Kühn is the most productive of the "Three." For the last ten years his efforts have been and still are devoted to the development of technique, improvement of the medium, and the obtaining of an increased potentiality of expression. His name calls up the recollection of a number of very effective landscapes distinguished by the bigness of their expression. Prominent among these, besides the "Roman Campagna" and the "Washer-woman on the Dunes," both reproduced in this number, are "Before the

Storm," "Poplars at the Brook," "Summer," "Southern Landscape," "Sirocco," and "Roman Villa." Kühn was the first to exhibit gum-prints at German exhibitions, thereby furnishing food for more than derogatory criticism of the new movement.

His artistic and technical development was very similar to that of his two friends, he appearing to be by natural endowment the most mobile and many-sided. He writes: "I had just about overcome the stage of doing the usual thing when I became acquainted with Watzek and Henneberg at the Vienna Camera Club. They exercised a great influence. I drew my inspiration chiefly from frequent visits to art-galleries and specially to the exhibitions of the Munich Secession. The landscapes of Petersen, Dill, and others opened my eyes. I began to understand what they were striving for. This realization I then endeavored to utilize in my own work. I sought to give correct values, to arrive at a more interesting grouping of masses, and to study nature more closely." Kühn is still striving for subtle tone-values. In closing his "Study of Values," which we heartily recommend to pictorial photographers, he says: "Orthochromatic photography is a medium which makes it very nearly possible for us to reproduce the colors according to their light-intensity. I must not, however, be understood to say that the photographer must invariably resort to this medium. He must control nature. For it is now entirely within his power to translate colors into their monochromatic values; and if the negative should show any discord, the gum process enables him at will to attune the discordant elements in the print. Thus, on the one hand, he can subdue or entirely suppress anything too prominent in the less important parts of the picture, while, on the other, he can emphasize all the subtleties where they are interesting and of importance for a pictorial effect. This naturally requires mastery of the technique. The apparatus, the soulless machine, must be subservient, the personality and its demands must dominate. The craftsman becomes an artist."

His pictures clearly show the result of his special methods. The proportion of the light and color-values is frequently so truly reproduced that we feel the sensation of color. It is not, however, solely the correct instinct for tonal values which gives such importance to his work. It is distinguished, besides, by his gift of seeing the essential and giving expression to it. There is a bigness in his conception, a quality which must not be underestimated, as a comparison with other even good photographic landscapes will readily show. The reproductions in this number give but a faint idea of his powers. His work includes genre pictures, street-scenes, still-life, portraits, color-experiments, etc. etc. Taken all in all, Kühn is the most diligent and competent of the German-Austrian pictorialists; and the success of an exhibition has frequently been decided by his participation or non-participation.

These three men deserve the entire credit for the development in Germany of pictorial photography as that term is understood to-day. Their artistic landscapes, refined "still-life" pictures, and their characteristic

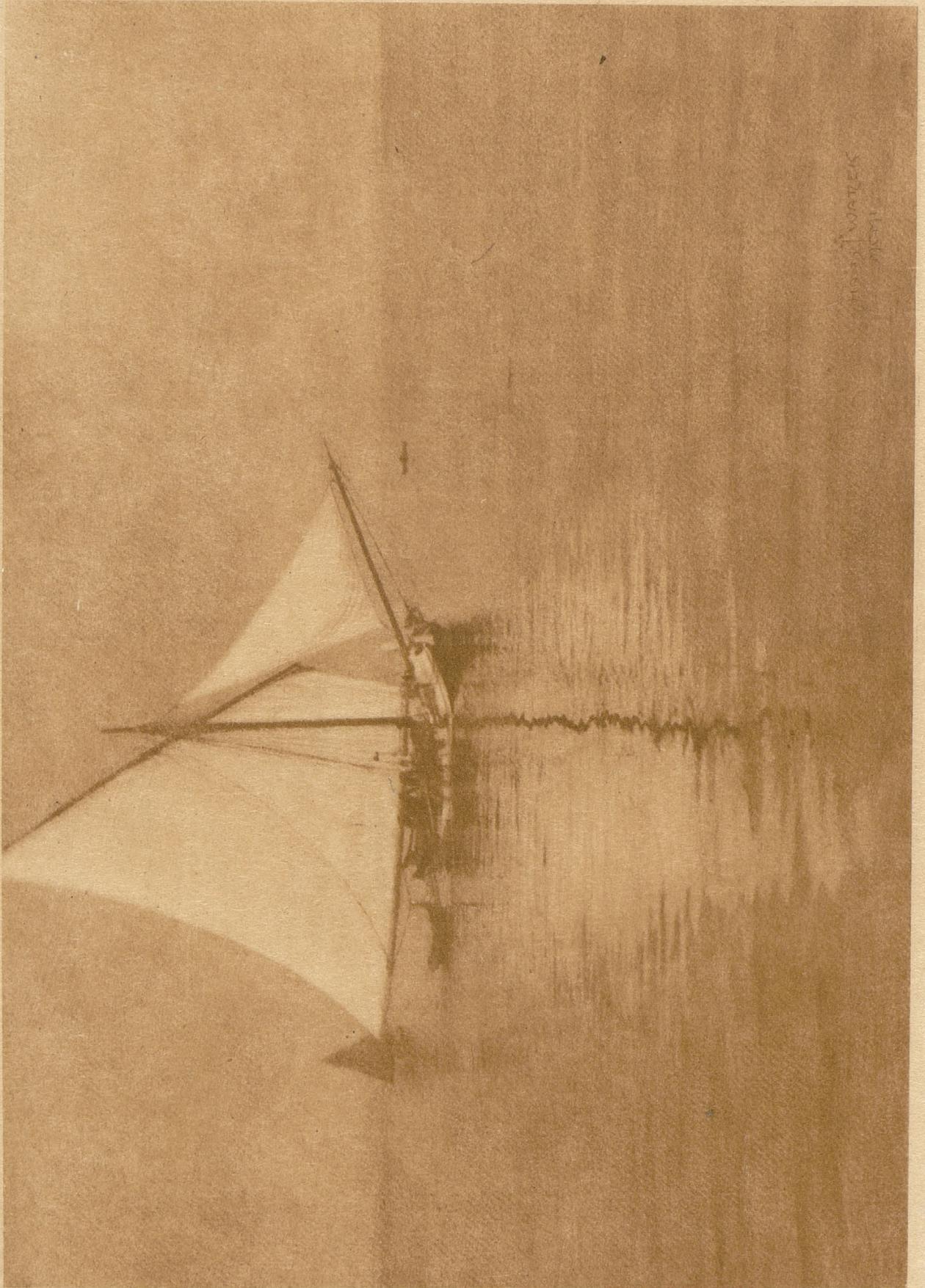
HANS WATZEK

- VIII. Poplars and Clouds.
- IX. Mountain Landscape.
- X. A Village Corner.
- XI. The White Sail.
- XII. Sheep.









MISSISSIPPI
1851

portraits have opened up the way. Even though much that they have worked for has been but superficially copied, and even though conventional photography still has its many influential champions, there remains the fact that they have brought about a revolution in the conception and photographic expression of nature which raises high expectations for the future. Let us hope that among the followers of these three masters there will be other serious workers and new productive talents whom the discoveries of the "Three" will lead to a still deeper artistic insight.

F. MATTHIES-MASUREN.

(Translated from the German by George Herbert Engelhard.)

OF VERITIES AND ILLUSIONS.—PART II.

“HEY are ill-drawn, poorly painted, and seem almost childish in conception; yet one feels like getting down on one's knees before them.” The speaker was one of our younger painters, Paris-trained, with a keen appreciation of technique and no little technical skill to his own account, but a fellow also of mind and imagination. His voice rang with serious earnestness, and what he spoke of was the work of Cimabue and Giotto.

He had made no new discovery—except for himself. He had realized that, in the presence of an almost complete negation of what is considered the ideal of painting to-day, he experienced such feelings as few modern works could inspire. What is the secret of this influence upon him and others? You may attribute it to the union of religion and art in those early pictures; and yet, in the usual understanding of this union, be very wide of the mark. For we have no proof that these men were religious painters in the sense that, for example, Fra Angelico was; and, on the contrary, much to suggest that the guiding motive of Giotto, at least, was a very keen love and realization of the dignity and meaning of external appearances. His point of view, in our modern speech, was that of a naturalist. Nor is it probable that the religious motive, which at the prompting of the Church these early pictures interpreted, would affect the younger painter I have quoted; still less the story-telling faculty exhibited by Giotto. We must seek, I think, another psychological explanation.

It is rather to be found in the very fact that these paintings are so remote from modern experience and ideals that they can be viewed with detachment from modern prejudices; they do not challenge the realities, as we understand them; they make an abstract appeal. And the abstract nature of their appeal is heightened by the further fact that the method of their painting was based upon abstract principles. It represented a survival of the Byzantine tradition, which had its origin in the influence of the Oriental ideal upon what was left of the Greek.

For the latter, in the days of Pericles, intent upon making the human figure the vehicle of expression of the perfect union of the physical and mental, had since that time declined. From impersonal types it had passed to personal and individual representations; from a union of matter and spirit to preoccupation with the physical; until, as morals became grosser, even the idea of physical perfection was lost sight of in the rendering of what was meretricious and licentious. Christianity, in its opposition to the immoral conditions, could not help opposing the art which gave expression to them. But it needed the service of art for the pictorial exposition of its own truths and ideals, and found the kind of art it needed in that of the Orient, which had reached Byzantium, the gateway of the East and West.

Its characteristics were primarily decorative: the opposite to realistic; the conventionalizing of form and the subordination of form to color. In such a treatment of form the Church had found a welcome antithesis to the gross realism of decadent Greek art and a convenient medium for conveying the symbolic teaching of Christianity. Thus the Oriental idea, which was rather to extract from form its essential qualities and to use them for the abstract purpose of producing a beautiful decoration, was diverted by the influence of the Church into the direction of conscious symbolism. Types of figure, of facial expression and gesture, arrangements even of composition, became fixed by the Church, and reproduced, one from another. Alliance with outside nature was rigidly excluded, and by perpetual inbreeding art became devitalized. It was the reinfusing of this moribund thing with vitality derived from nature-study that became the business of the Renaissance, and Giotto was the earliest of the independent students. Yet the impression that his work arouses is due, not so much to what he derived from nature or to any realistic skill, notwithstanding that at heart he was a naturalist, as to the renewed force which he gave to the old Oriental ideal. With him it again becomes a living thing: a noble form of decoration, with large dignity in the balanced arrangement of the full and empty spaces, grand silhouettes of form, simple flatness of mass and lightness and purity of color. Finally he restored to the figures the significance of gesture; and painted a moving story in which the actors, by gesture and facial expression, played a real part. Yet, once again, it is not through these latter qualities in which he was still a tyro, but through the abstract decorative ones, reinforced by his study of nature and made thereby a living expression of Giotto himself, that his work makes so strong an impression upon the modern mind

In it we are face to face with what, so far, is the noblest use of the Oriental principles of painting made by a European. But Giotto was an indifferent draughtsman, knew nothing of modeling, had little instinct for perspective, and, while he had the Oriental feeling for values in color, had none for light and atmosphere. He was deficient in the qualities that constitute the chief merit of modern painting. He used to the best of his power an inheritance which subsequent painters did their best to disown, until it passed entirely out of European consideration.

Meanwhile, however, after the lapse of four hundred years, the Oriental idea has revolved round to us again; this time not as an inheritance, but as a discovery. The influence that aforetime entered Europe by way of Byzantium has reached us this time from the opposite end of Asia—from Japan. It began to trickle westward sixty years ago; and to-day it is fashionable to admire Japanese art, and, in the light of it, that of China, whence it was derived. But is the lesson of it at all clearly understood? Has it yet made any general impression on Western painting? Is there any reason why it should?

Well, I doubt if any thoughtful person will deny that modern painting is in need of being revitalized from some source. Not to be renewed is to become by degrees moribund and finally to die; and out of its own traditions and ideals Western painting has pretty well reached the limit of vitalizing possibilities. For well on to a hundred years it has been living wholly on the sustenance that it has drawn from its own past; making new shows of life by diligent inbreeding, but showing less and less capacity to procreate. The only new birth it has consummated, if indeed it be a new one, is a closer observance of the laws of light; yet this at best is not a fundamental principle but a phase of technical motive. It is the final spasm of novelty in that long worship of the external appearances of the world which has been through centuries the principle of Western painting. It is a well-sounding one, let us admit. Light! Light! After long evolving, painting has at last reached the light! But what next? It might be good if the light should prove strong enough to cast to the ground and blind, as a certain light did Saul of Tarsus, if so be that recovery of sight might be accompanied by a new mind.

For it is a new mind that is needed, if the vitalizing of painting is to be renewed; a new point of view, a new *raison d'être*, a new fundamental principle. Our old one of the supreme importance of matter is about exhausted; the physical perfections and imperfections of the human figure have yielded their maximum of motive; so, too, the externals of things of man's invention from architecture to *bric-à-brac* and those of inanimate nature. Notwithstanding its inexhaustible variety, the theme of appearances is pretty well worked out, a many times told tale, of interest mainly now for the manner of its telling, not for the matter told. If painting is to maintain a hold upon the intelligence and imagination, as music does, and possibly poetry, and to grow forward in touch with the growing needs of humanity, it must find some fundamental motive other than the *appearances* of the world. Music dives below the surface and lifts man up from the level of things visibly ascertained, buoying his spirit up toward that height in which assurance passes into conjecture. Poetry has done, and may continue to do likewise. But our painting, cluttered with the obvious—the surface appearance or superficial sentiment—is by comparison a childish art, intellectually and spiritually unimpressive, *bourgeoise*. If it is to keep itself in living competition with the superior impressiveness of modern music—modern poetry, being questionably convicted of a “slump,” may be left to settle its

own rehabilitation—it must take on something of quality which is the essence of music—the *abstract*. It is here that it may learn of the Oriental ideal, as exemplified in Japanese art.

The latter, while the art of the Western world has been too exclusively concerned with visible appearances, has been devoted, also too exclusively perhaps, to the expression of that which is embodied in the material appearance—in Japanese phraseology, the "*Kokoro*." This, translated into our terms of thought, seems to connote that portion of the universal life or spirit manifested in the material. Thus, inherent in a spray of plum-blossom, is a fragment of the universal life that has been the principle of its growth and has determined its outward difference from other embodiments of the life-spirit. To imitate the merely outward appearance of the spray would be a slavish, childish feat, to interpret by means of its perfection the indwelling *Kokoro* an act of high religion. Or, again, when the metal has been forged and tempered into the sword, its dull, stolid endurance has been purified and quickened; embodied in it now is the soul of chivalry, self-sacrifice, and patriotism. To fashion the blade to an exquisite rectitude of line and poise, to temper it to resistance and to quivering suppleness, to render its surface free from blemish, radiant in its purity, to adorn its guard with loveliness of imagery—all this is not to labor, but to worship. Whether he make a sword, a writing-box, a vase, or what-not, whether he carve a panel or cut a mortise, paint a picture or lacquer a tray, it is an artist who works, and his art is his religion, his religion his art. For is it not his privilege to create some habitation, some temple, for an indwelling of a part of the Universal Spirit which is the supreme Idea—Deity?

Compare with this our Western notion of an artist expressing himself in his work. So far as it relates to a man giving of himself to his work and to the work being colored by his idiosyncrasy, it would apply equally to a Japanese. But in the psychological sense of being a motive to aim at that a painter should embody himself, his emotions, sentiments, and preferences, in his picture—a very usual notion with our artists, and perhaps the best—what a difference between this and the Oriental idea-motive! On the one hand, a little of the Universal which may link the imagination with the whole; on the other a little of that infinitesimally small part of it, an individual, bounded by its own meager limits, centered upon its own insufficiency.

Depend upon it, if painting is to recover for itself something of that needfulness to the modern intelligence which music has developed, it must be along the lines of the latter, in the direction of abstract expression. To some extent, of course, its expression is already abstract; the appeal, made severally by line, color, chiaroscuro, and tone, being in its nature purely abstract. Moreover, I am sure, it is capable of demonstration that the superior impressiveness of the works of the great masters is due to the preponderance of this appeal over the mere concrete facts of the picture. And the cause of this preponderance is that the artist himself was not possessed with the concrete facts, but kindled by the abstract suggestion they

conveyed to him. On the other hand, in the case of works of inferior impressiveness, it is preoccupation with the concrete that appears to have been in the artist's mind, and the abstract appeal is correspondingly less.

It is quite usual in these days for painters to extol the handsome spacing of Giotto's work, while admitting his shortcomings in drawing and modeling. They see in the latter cause for congratulating themselves upon a superior accomplishment, in the former something to be imitated; and the problem they set themselves is how the two may be practically reconciled.

But they put difficulty in the way of a solution by regarding the matter as one of technique merely; failing to recognize that embodied in it is a question of principle, of point of view. What is admirable in Giotto's work is the survival of the old Oriental habit of regarding the world in the abstract, of regarding nature, not as a thing to be imitated, but as a visible embodiment of unseen forces, seeable only through their temporary material habitation, and of choosing, therefore, a manner of rendering that shall help the imagination to look beyond the concrete to the spiritual.

If our painters could possess themselves of this abstract point of view—a thing most difficult in this age of materialism and of intellectualism rather than of imagination, and in a society that bends every effort, intellectual and otherwise, to concrete gains—it might then find a source of living potentiality in the admirableness of Giotto's work, and even also in what they regard as his limitations. If they were not obsessed with the idea that the chief aim of art is to imitate the obvious, they might find in his lack of chiaroscuro, at any rate, a principle as well as a trick of technique; just as with the Japanese, its use has not been a realistic but a decorative motive. It is the recognition of the principle involved in spacing, and in lack of imitative chiaroscuro, that constitutes the greatness of Puvis de Chavannes. He viewed his subject in its abstract significance, and then set himself to portray it in a way that should keep the mind concerned with the abstract. In doing so he often trained his own skill in drawing down to a similarity with primitive art, to an extent that arouses a suspicion of affectation. For it is not by imitating mannerisms or deficiencies, nor indeed by any tricks of technique, that a new thing is to be accomplished, but by using the modern knowledge in the light of the older principle.

CHARLES H. CAFFIN.

THE LONDON PHOTOGRAPHIC SALON FOR 1905.



HERE is no doubt about it, the American side of the London Photographic Salon for 1905, held at the *Gallery of the Royal Society of Water-colours*, is in general and in particular, the freshest, the newest, the most progressive, the most encouraging, and by far the best collection America has yet sent to London. But, seeing the high level of the bulk and the enormous superiority of the few best things, I would have liked it to consist of sixty-five frames instead of the full limit of seventy-five, which our gallery-space imposed on us. Quite ten frames might with strict justice have been deleted as without value to a public exhibition; they may be of great use to their makers as landmarks in their progress; but for exhibition-walls one ought to expect, and get, only really worked-out and definitely achieved things; certainly not such things as many of these are—due to fogged plates, or bad paper, or to the ignorant or mistaken use of photographic tools.

Though fine technique is secondary in importance, it is as absolutely essential as the vision, the conception, the desire. No vision can be fully put down except by pure and accomplished technique; and the ten frames I would have deleted show, to me, such a plentiful lack of this proof of studentship as to make them positively painful to those who know what photographic technique means and who are also enthusiasts and purists on the artistic side.

To turn to the real pictures, Mr. Steichen gives, on the whole, a bigger impression than before. The two color-studies, No. 131, *The Flat-Iron*, and No. 138, *The Pond, Moonrise*, are both extremely fine in vision and working-out, without any eccentricities to mar their completeness; and though stimulating somewhat to the incredulous from the purely photographic point of view (till one knows how they are done!) they are plainly due to camera and lens, and finely effective on the walls. *The Pond, Moonrise*, No. 138, is especially fine in color. No. 130, *In Memoriam*, is a quite notable nude study, very fine in line and disposition, and the abandonment of despair is well suggested by the untortured pose and the mass of falling hair. No. 129, *The Poster Lady*, is gloriously full and rich; it glows with fine lighting, and its masses and the subordination of detail make it amply deserving of its title. I am especially grateful to Mr. Stieglitz for lending us his copy of 142, the full and best version of the celebrated *Rodin* negative. It is new to us here, and is a great contribution to the dignity and beauty of our walls. The value and effect of emphasis in the rich and deep but far from empty blacks, in the soft and splendidly modeled contours of the Hugo statue, has never been better shown in any photographic work. It is a unique triumph for the artist in both the camera-work and the superb printing. No. 144 is very welcome to me, as it gives so intimate a portrait of the artist himself. It is a most personal effort, and I enjoy nothing more on our walls.

How extraordinarily various photography can be in its effects is well shown in contrasting No. 137 with No. 165, both subjects being a *Mother and Child* in the open air in vivid sunlight. The soft pervading luminosity of No. 137, bathed in true light, with a most completely felt composition, contrasts most curiously with the solidity, the sculpturesque treatment of No. 165, as strong as the other is delicate, and yet both equally true in their rendering of the lighting. No. 159, *Duse*, is, alas, impossible of acceptance to me as a portrait realization of this one woman amongst women. I know how miraculously various she can be, for I have seen her act many times in all the characters she has given in London; but she was never so merely the lachrymose invalid this version gives her out to be. No one looking at either this or the version contributed by Baron de Meyer would at once think, as one should of any presentation of this wonderful creature, that here surely is one of the greatest among the great, *the* woman of ineffable and most compelling charm. In studying her while acting, she has seemed to me to offer a countless procession of perfect photographic studies; pose after pose occurred, needing no correction or alteration to make a perfect picture, as well as a perfect realization of the great Duse.

Of Mr. Stieglitz's exhibit of seven pictures, No. 127, *Ploughing*, is a good composition and very picturesque; but I do not fully like its color or the treatment of the distant hills. It seems to lack aerial space. No. 120, *Spring*, is a most delightfully quaint posing of a child, but here again I feel its value minimized by a lack of planes, a lack of aerial space, of atmosphere. Far more successful is No. 132, *Going to the Post*, very decorative in effect and full of space and light. In No. 172, *Horses*, I incline to think that, good and bold though it is, considering the strong sunlight it was taken in, if we are given as much as we are of detailed modeling in the white horse, we should have as much relatively in the black horse—at least a painter would give more by far. No. 166, *Miss S. R.*, is a very personal, *chic* study, full of individuality; but what a gain it would be to the naïve charm, the *espièglerie* of the whole, if the obtrusive and opaque leaf masses at the top could have been removed in the printing, a quite simple matter to such a past-master as its maker is.

Mrs. Käsebier is much more charmingly represented than last year. No. 133, *Mother and Child*, is very suave in its lines and lighting; but the scraped lines on the foreground worry more than a little and are not fully understandable either. No. 136, *The Crystal*, is full of light and charm, delicate yet vivid to a degree. So also is No. 167, *The Baron de Meyer*, a most quaint bit of phantasy, perfect in its realization of out-o'-door feeling and light; personally I found it all but unrecognizable as a likeness, owing, I suppose, to the white suit and unusual pose. No. 168 is a very successful gum-study of a head under a veil, rich in opposing masses and delicate in the veil treatment; and No. 169 and No. 173 are very welcome as showing Mrs. Käsebier's old-time supremacy in direct portraiture, of which she is such a past-mistress.

For sterling value and photographic accomplishment under the best

artistic impulses, Mr. Coburn's contributions are as worthwhile as anything in the gallery. No. 162, *London Bridge in Sunlight*, is perhaps the very truest rendering of sunlight photography has yet achieved. Lines, composition, masses, sense of movement in the people, all are super-excellent, while truth to tone and atmosphere are nothing short of marvelous. It is emphatically one of the pictures of the year. It appeals to me especially, as it is so entirely due to direct, true, and inescapable photography, and yet is as full of the artist's, the painter's intention. It is a veritable triumph for the camera. Mr. Coburn's five portraits are remarkable for their largeness of manner, their striking insistence on the individuality of the sitter, and withal for their picture-making qualities. They are particularly valuable, as they are so inevitably pure photographic work. Such things as these again prove that the camera is all right as an artistic tool, if you can only get the right man behind it.

Mr. Clarence White's work alternately repels and attracts me; it is so often so curiously complete and successful; informed by all that is artistic and technically good in some works, and yet in others as curiously negligent, uninformed, and unworked-out. No. 134, *The Kiss*, is very beautiful, quite successful in every way, though a most difficult subject to work out to so complete an end, so fully yet so restrainedly. The only drawback to its sense of originality is that it too vividly recalls the *Paolo and Francesca*, by D. G. Rossetti. But for all that, it holds its own, and is quite one of the most beautiful things Mr. White has made. No. 135 is a puzzle to me; it appears to be a study from the nude, but where came that impossible monster of a globe from? The title says *A Statuette and Crystal Globe*, but there is nothing in the surface treatment to suggest either clay, plaster, or marble; and the size and placing of the figure does not in the least suggest a small statuette. It is a charming thing as it is, but one can't help puzzle over it, and that no work of art should give rise to. No. 170 is not fully successful in its treatment. It is a *genre* picture, and should therefore be fully worked out all over. The blurring of the contours by the too large aperture of the lens and the lack of precision in outline in the background accessories are inadmissible, and only serve to distract from the full enjoyment of the beautifully placed and lighted figure. I am sure no painter would have treated such a subject in such a loosely defined manner. Mr. White's greatest success here is in No. 191, *Portrait of Mrs. White*, a quite painter-like treatment of an admirably placed figure, with a really beautiful sense of space in the room behind her. The subordination of the accessories and background, yet without any loss of understanding of them, is in quite a fine manner, and the whole ranks the maker of it as a master indeed. But No. 181 is to me as distressingly weak as the other is fine; lines, arrangement, massing, lighting (is there any definite lighting?), all are technically poor and inefficient. It is called *A Study in Composition*, but where does it come in, if we consider the huddlement of the figure on the floor, the position and perspective of the half-chair, the drawing of the lower hand and arm? The only possible merit is in some good lines in the draped skirt; but it is surely not a work

fit to go on the same gallery-wall as the other works (named above) by this genuine artist. No. 182 and No. 185 are also poor things, possibly interesting for the home-portfolio, but for public exhibition I say certainly not.

Mr. Yarnall Abbott's color-pictures are his best things; especially so is No. 124, *The Albambra*, though I must confess to being unable to discover anything recognizable in the building. The blue sky and sunlit wall make a glowing and effective picture on the wall; but why is it called *moonlight*, surely it is the plainest and most usual of daylight.

Perhaps the most wonderful picture in the whole American collection, if one considers the difficulties and the all-around success, is No. 139, *The Tale of Isolde*, by Benedict Herzog; certainly its price of five hundred dollars is the most wonderful ever attached to a photograph. The whole seems a hugely clever and successful composite photograph; the very lovely model is evidently the same for all three figures—there could not be three such lovely beings in one family. [This is only one of the instances in which Mr. Evans's conclusions are all wrong. There is no shortage of handsome women in America.—EDITORS.] But the posing of the heads and hands—if one excepts, perhaps, the rather wooden forearm of the reading figure—is quite unexceptionable; the drapery is amazingly good and painter-like, though one would like to be more convinced that it is all due to the unaided camera. The same artist's *Selima*, No. 143, is also rich in color and fine in posing. The spotty background worries and distracts, the dots are so evident, and look as though meant decoratively, but are not on the closer examination they tempt one to. I would also have liked the model to have paid a visit first to the dentist, and had that overobtrusive incisor removed; it spoils a wonderfully fine and expressive mouth, and forces attention away from the grand head and its fine posing. No. 174, *Portrait*, by Miss Rives, is very welcome as proving my praise of last year to have had a sound basis. It is rich in color-sense, finely lit and modeled, and exceptionally good in its printing. It owes a good deal to the example set by Mrs. Käsebier, but that is only the greater compliment to the younger worker, as it is only the quality that is derivative; there is no sort of imitation.

Dr. Spitzer has two wonderful portraits in Nos. 10 and 16; exceedingly characteristic heads, virile in the extreme, and most sound and true in work in every respect; very great triumphs for the camera and its user. Herr Kühn has a quite marvelous picture in No. 32, *Zu der Düne*, one of the most arresting things I have ever seen in photography. Three peasants, with white mob caps, are walking up a sand-hill road, and the "go," the effort, the sense of rapid progress up the acclivity, are all so acutely true and picturesque as to keep one looking at it till one almost gets tired, as though sharing the toil of the pedestrians. The working-out is naturally, coming from so accomplished an artist, of the most thorough kind; it is complete in every sense, and no more compelling picture has been shown in a photographic gallery.

The French section was this year selected by MM. Demachy and Puyo, and this has resulted in their modestly limiting themselves to three pictures

each; but as these fully exploit their special and several characteristics, one must not unduly complain at the paucity of frames. M. Grimpel has a very rich study in five colors, quietly strong and true. M. Le Begue has a study of three heads, most beautifully modeled, and printed in a very rich sanguine. The only blot on the French collection is the colored head-study by M. Hachette, the purple tones of which are most displeasing and untrue; it hangs most disastrously for the other fine color-work this section is so noticeable for.

Our English section is above the average, I think, in good, sound, sane work, though it lacks anything of a startlingly fine character. Mr. Craig Annan, in No. 24, sends a nearly full-length portrait of that very delicate artist in black and white, Miss Jessie M. King, that is much beyond anything he has done for some years, excepting only his superb portrait a year or so ago of the sculptor.

Will Cadby has some very delicate and intimate child-studies, which must be very precious to the parents. Mrs. Cadby has but one, a kitten-study, a very happily caught pose, very nicely furry and arched back, and most refreshingly apart from the animal versions one gets so tired of. Mr. Cochrane is stronger than usual; his No. 28, *Grannie's Stocking*, is very successfully worked out, very luminous and rich, and especially well placed; it is full of dignity and is a striking success on the walls. In No. 4 he has a very strong, Dutch-like study of an old woman holding a small cask; it hangs very effectively indeed.

Mr. Moss is not so fine as last year, neither so happy or rare in subject, or so fresh and unhackneyed in treatment. Neither is Mr. Horsley Hinton so much in advance as one would like to expect, though his No. 26, *Rylstone*, is good, sound work, less mannered and therefore more convincing and enjoyable than usual.

Mr. Keighley sends three very choice pictures, though in no case any advance on his fine work of last year; the same characteristics pervade them, and afford a standing rebuke to those who say there is no individuality in photography; these are instantly recognizable from the farthest end of the room, and their paternity is writ large all over them. Mr. Hollyer sends a vivid portrait of the lately deceased painter, Simeon Solomon; and he sends also a portrait, enlarged on canvas, of the writer hereof, good in likeness and very strong and good in handling. Mr. F. T. Hollyer sends two of the best color-studies in the gallery, the head in No. 80 being exceptionally delicate, true, and miniature-like in color. Mrs. Barton sends four works very much in her well-known manner, Nos. 213 and 224 being the freshest and most successful. Mr. George Davison's No. 217, *Molesey Lock*, is a large-mannered study of evening, full of rich gloom. The treatment of the water in No. 215, *A Wet Sun*, is most felicitously given. Mr. Calland is happier than usual this year, but space forbids any further detailed criticisms, though there are many more pictures fully deserving of detailed notice.

To sum up: the average of the American work is the most encouraging sign one could desire for the outlook of artistic Pictorial Photography.

The exceptional works by the recognized masters, there and in Austria, are quite impressive in their dignity and importance; and, altogether, the "old country" will have to gird up its loins and look to its armor if it means to keep worthy of a like respect. This leads me to a reflection that may partially excuse the comparative slackness of the English workers. We English Links are, almost to a man, immersed in business the whole year round, with the exception of the few weeks given to holiday-making. It is, of course, a matter of luck if the holiday, mostly chosen on other grounds than for camera-work, takes one to the right place and if the weather proves propitiously good or bad for the yielding of *Salon*-pictures; even if the negatives result, there comes the very real difficulty of finding time to adequately work them up into things good enough for *Salon*-walls. To the artist, the man engaged all day and every day in thinking out artistic work, by camera or what else, the selection and treatment of *Salon*-subjects becomes a matter of real ease compared to the business-man unable, except spasmodically, to give it the thought and prolonged attention it needs. But progressive artistic photography will not be more widely achieved until exhibition-work is made a matter of continued thought all the year round. The autumn exhibition *must* be made the important topic of the thought given to camera-work: three fine pictures are worth any number of irresponsible exposures leading to nothing fit for public exhibition.

But even then, we exhibition-organizers, as well as the public, must remember that it is not to be expected that every year can beat each previous year; there is always too large an amount of luck in getting hold of the right subject and finding it when in perfect condition. The real test of progress will be found, not in the presence of a minority of startlingly fine things, but in a general freshness of aim, in new paths being traversed, the refusal to redo what has been done so often before; and, lastly, in nothing being shown to the public that is not as fully worked out as its subject demands.

FREDERICK H. EVANS.

September 15, 1905.

THE CRITICS.

Upon the critics' hearts press theories
Of all the schools the many do not heed.
Theirs are the sad responsibilities
Of teaching myriads who will not read.

DALLETT FUGUET.

COMPLETE LIST OF AMERICAN PICTURES AT THE LONDON SALON, 1905.

TITLE	PHOTOGRAPHER	PRICE
Sous-le-Cap—Quebec	C. Yarnall Abbott	\$60.00
The Alhambra—Moonlight	" " "	—
First Snow	" " "	25.00
Crépuscule en Ville	" " "	25.00
The Pier	" " "	40.00
In Arcadia	" " "	50.00
The Vigil	Annie W. Brigman	25.00
Wier's Close—Edinburgh	Alvin Langdon Coburn,	—
Portrait of Austin Dobson	" " "	25.00
Portrait of Mark Twain	" " "	25.00
Portrait of Solomon J. Solomon, A.R.A.,	" " "	25.00
Portrait of G. K. Chesterton	" " "	25.00
Portrait of Frank Brangwyn	" " "	25.00
The Bridge—Sunlight	" " "	25.00
Westminster Abbey	" " "	25.00
Waterloo Bridge	" " "	25.00
The Landing	John Dolman	25.00
Fourth of July	William B. Dyer	25.00
Summer	R. Eickemeyer, Jr.	25.00
The Picture Book	J. Mitchell Elliot	5.00
Music	Frank Eugene	35.00
A Corner of the Forum	F. R. Fraprie	25.00
A Study in Composition	Herbert G. French	—
Marcella	F. Benedict Herzog	50.00
Selima	" " "	75.00
A Tale of Isolde	" " "	500.00
April Showers	William F. James	—
Mother and Child	Gertrude Käsebier	—
The Crystal	" "	25.00
Baron de Meyer	" "	—
The Bride	" "	60.00
Portrait	" "	25.00
Portrait	" "	25.00
Portrait of a Boy	" "	25.00
The Piano	" "	25.00
Spanish Girl	Joseph T. Keiley	—
Sunrise—Lake George	" " "	75.00
Indian Chief	" " "	75.00
Indian Head	" " "	75.00
Mercedes	" " "	—
Landscape—Evening	Marshall R. Kernochan,	25.00
Sunlit Snow	W. B. Post	15.00

TITLE	PHOTOGRAPHER	PRICE
Portrait of Mrs. H.	Landon Rives	—
The Cannon	Harry C. Rubincam	\$12.50
Winter Landscape	" " "	12.50
Mary	Sarah C. Sears	—
Not Titled	George H. Seeley	50.00
Landscape	" " "	50.00
Woman With Dog	" " "	50.00
Fatima	Mary R. Stanbery	—
Dorothy Sutton	" " "	—
Profile	Eduard J. Steichen	50.00
The Poster Lady	" " "	50.00
In Memoriam: R. S.	" " "	50.00
Flatiron—Evening	" " "	50.00
Mother and Child—Spring	" " "	50.00
The Pond—Moonrise	" " "	60.00
Portrait: Mr. W. M. C.	" " "	50.00
Rodin—Le Penseur	" " "	—
Portraits—Evening	" " "	50.00
Duse	" " "	50.00
Mother and Child—Sunlight Patches	" " "	50.00
Spring	Alfred Stieglitz	35.00
Ploughing	" " "	40.00
Going to the Post	" " "	35.00
Miss S. R.	" " "	25.00
Horses	" " "	35.00
Nearing Land	" " "	25.00
Katherine	" " "	—
The Boy	John Francis Strauss	15.00
The Kiss	Clarence H. White	30.00
The Statuette and Crystal Globe	" " "	30.00
Winter Landscape	" " "	25.00
The Portfolio	" " "	30.00
A Study in Composition	" " "	30.00
Boy With Camera Work	" " "	—
The Child	" " "	30.00
Maternal Love	" " "	30.00
Mrs. Clarence H. White	" " "	—

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FOCUS.



WHEN we every day see photographs in which all detail is lost in a blur, and detail, too, which might be interesting, when sometimes even the whole meaning of the motif is sunken in obscurity, we wonder why this is; and when we ask the maker of these photographs how and why they have done this, they invariably reply that it is a matter of focus, and that focus is a matter of taste. Is this so? Is focus a matter of taste?

Now, what is meant by the word focus? Focus is generally understood to mean the bringing together of dispersed light into one clear image by means of a lens or concave mirror, etc. The object of focusing is to spread upon a surface an image of matter in space, so that we may at our leisure examine and see what is existing in the world outside of us. The camera has greatly the advantage over the eye in focusing, as it is able to produce well-defined shapes of equally distant objects at one and the same instant over the whole negative, but the retina of the eye is properly sensitized on only a very small part of its surface, a mere point, and to at all gain a clear conception of even a small natural object, this point has to be moved hundreds and hundreds of times. Experiment for yourself; turn to some pages of this journal that you have not read and quickly fix your eyes on one word, hold them there, and see how many lines above and below will be distinct. How many words to the right and to the left can you read? Very few; not because the lens of the eye does not throw a clear image of the whole page on the retina, but because only a small part of the retina is adapted to understanding sharp focus, the rest feeling but vaguely. Therefore, to understand the full page, the eye has laboriously to direct its sensitive point toward every part. To see completely, even as familiar an object as a head, we must search it over and over again.

But rapid as these kinesthetic movements are, the multiplicity of detail in nature is so enormous that more than an appreciable length of time is required before the retinal image of an object can be completed. What will take the camera the one-hundredth part of a second to accomplish, will take the eye one hundred seconds, or maybe as many minutes. And, further, the eye fatigues easily and saves itself whenever it can, and, unless it is especially interested, will bring clearly into its field of distinct vision but few points of what it is examining, the result being that a really somewhat blurred picture is presented to the mind. It was these shortcomings that made Helmholtz cry that "if an optician were to furnish us with an apparatus as poorly constructed as the eye we would throw it on the rubbish-heap."

However, it is through the virtues and weaknesses of the eye that we know and recognize nature, and if the photographer wishes to make us believe that his photographs look like nature, he must subordinate the virtues of his superbly constructed machine and force it to imitate the defects

and manners of human vision. At times it will be appropriate to focus clearly, at moments to blur. When the *contours* in nature are intensely interesting we search closely; when the interest lies in large contrasting masses, we are more lax. On a golden summer afternoon the eye is lazy, and all things look a little fuzzy—but only a little. Our recollections of dreams are very vague; we remember nebulous masses, and the photographer may, if the subject is in accordance with the sentiment, blur considerably, thus producing a dreamy effect. But making dreamy images of motifs full of life is incongruous, because such scenes awaken the interests to their fullest, and the eye becomes active; and a wuzzy print of any head whose charm lies in the modeling and chiseling is inane. I do not deny the occasional appropriateness of extreme fuzziness. I think it ably represents nightmares, contortions of the mad, and would be thoroughly scientific in illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*, and any other representations of agony; for frequently when the mind is much shocked the blood rushes to the head and the eye fails to focus. And if any of you are ever fortunate enough to be present at a murder, throw the plate well out of focus, and develop to obtain the greatest contrast of values.

The opposite extreme of focus, namely the razor-like edges used so frequently by the professional photographers of portraits, is also untrue, because, as has been before said, the attitude of minutely following contours and details is unnatural to us, except at moments when we wish to make a microscopic examination. In apparently direct contradiction to the above statement is the daguerreotype with lines as sharp as possible; but when we examine them we will find that they are broken by the metallic luster of the plate; also the daguerreotype, owing to its small size, is intended to be examined closely with strained eyes.

There are certain possibilities of error in the art of landscape which photographers easily fall into, one of the most frequent being to focus on the wrong plane. When we are out of doors and look over the fields and trees, we adjust our focal vision to the different parts as we move our eyes from one to the other, and in this way, after a certain time, obtain a conception of the whole. But the camera is unable to combine time-elements; it has to choose one plane upon which to focus. Now, many photographers seem to think that it is of little importance which is the one chosen, as long as it is the object of interest. It, however, so happens that a blurred image very frequently presents to the mind the appearance of being enveloped in mist, and the more obscured it is, the more mist do we feel there to be between it and us. Therefore, when we see the near foreground in a photograph clearly drawn, we ascribe the increasing fuzziness in the receding planes to increasing mist, and feel all to be logical. But when, on the other hand, the distant foreground, or near middle distance, has been chosen as the focal interest, we fail to understand why there should appear to be more mist between us and the immediate foreground than between us and that further away.

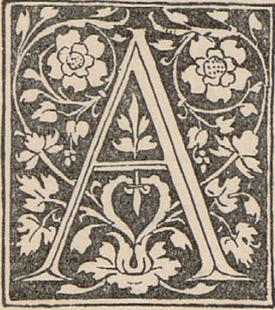
Now, Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, points out that Turner was frequently in the habit of focusing on the distance, or even extreme distance;

he says, "Turner introduced a new era in landscape art by showing that the foreground might be sunk for the distance, and that it was possible to express immediate proximity to the spectator, without giving anything like completeness to the forms of the near objects. *This is not done by slurred or soft lines*, observe (always the sign of vice in art), *but by a decisive imperfection, a firm but partial assertion of form*, which the eye feels indeed to be close home to it and yet can not rest upon, or cling to, nor entirely understand, and from which it is driven of necessity to those parts of distance on which it is intended to repose." The italics are my own and it is to these I wish to call attention, for, owing to a complete misunderstanding of the methods of Turner, and also of the teachings of Ruskin (which latter I do, however, admit must frequently have been misunderstood even by himself), there have arisen and existed artists in many different countries, who, in the attempt to attract attention to the middle distances of their landscapes, have thrown their foregrounds entirely out of focus; and to-day there are no end of photographers who do exactly the same thing, with the invariable result of throwing the foreground beyond the middle distance. It is "*a decisive imperfection, a partial assertion of form*" that is required in the foreground when we want to accentuate the distance, but never fuzziness. How to obtain this the photographers must determine for themselves, possibly focusing on the foreground and then to a certain extent blurring by local manipulation, but in such a manner that distinct points and details may be seen here and there will produce the desired result. This, at least, is the method that Turner employed.

I do not mean to say that the middle distance should never be the focal interest; but, when it is, the foreground must be so completely uninteresting that we unconsciously overlook it, and thus fail to be disturbed by the inconsistency of the atmospheric effect.

ROLAND ROOD.

P. S.



AND behold I was weary and I slept. And in my dreams my eyes were opened and I beheld a Being.

And he was looking through an instrument, as it were through a microscope.

And (in my dream) I spoke to him and said, "What are you looking at?"

And he said, "It is a bug. I found it sucking sap from the stem of a weed in the corner of the kitchen garden."

And I asked, "Is it a rare bug?"

And he answered, "Its numbers are a pest."

And I asked, "Why do you study it?"

And he answered, "I have nothing else to do."

And (in my dream) I drew near, and he gave me the instrument, and I looked into it.

And I could see the bug which he had caught, and the heart of it, and the juices of it moving through its veins, and the white corpuscles that were in the juices of it.

And behold, these infinitesimalities were what we call the sun and the stars and the orbs of the vault of heaven.

And I said to him, "Are *you* then God?"

And he smiled and said, "I am but a poor groping Being like the rest of my race and if there be a God or no, I know not."

And I said to myself (in my dream), "If the Earth and her sister planets, the Dog Star, the Sun, and the myriad millions of the Milky Way are cells in the ichor of an unconsidered insect on a vagrant weed in the unkempt garden of a being who himself knows neither whence he came nor whither he is bound nor if God lives—then I will tell the readers of Camera Work that they may see that, agreeing with us if they can, or differing from us if they must, at least they need not take us too damned seriously."

J. B. KERFOOT.

THE PHOTO-SECESSION EXHIBITIONS.



As we go to press, the "Little Galleries" of the Photo-Secession at No. 291 Fifth Avenue, New York City, are about to be opened; the formal opening taking place on the evening of November twenty-fourth, preceded by an informal dinner at Mouquin's.

The first exhibition is to consist entirely of the work of Photo-Secessionists. The prints have been selected from this year's American exhibit at the London salon, together with the Secession prints shown in the Fine Arts Department of the Lewis and Clark Exposition at Portland, Ore. In addition to these, other pictures by Associates and Fellows of the Photo-Secession are included. This exhibition will remain on the walls throughout December, and will be followed by exhibitions devoted to Viennese, French, and British photographs and by other exhibitions of modern art not necessarily photographic.

These exhibitions will be open to the public on presentation of visiting-card on week-days between ten and twelve A.M. and two till six A.M.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.



THE pictorial section of this number of Camera Work is devoted entirely to the work of that celebrated Viennese triumvirate, Heinrich Kühn, Hugo Henneberg, and Hans Watzek. Each one of these photographers merits a whole number of our magazine being devoted to his work, but as these men have always worked, and always exhibited, as a group, we simply act in their spirit in representing them as we do. In twelve plates we can but inadequately give a fair idea of the scope of their work; it is our intention, in future numbers, to bring additional plates from time to time. Owing to the fact that the originals from which our photogravures were made are mostly gum-prints, measuring two by three feet, and more, in size, the reduced picture, as appearing in our pages, necessarily loses some of that power and charm of technique, two factors that are so important in making the Viennese school what it is.

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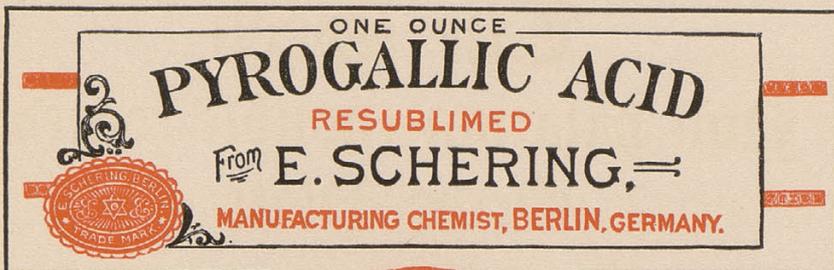
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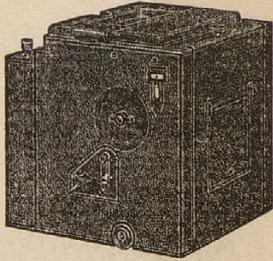
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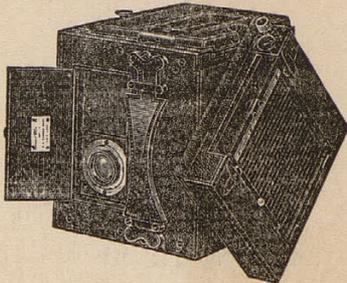
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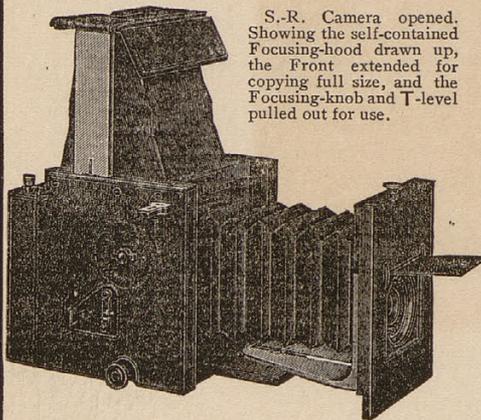
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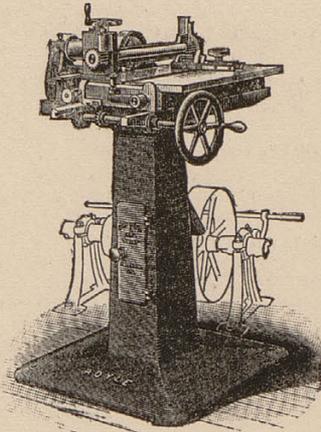
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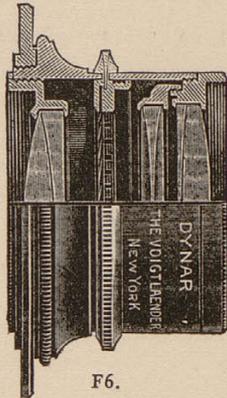
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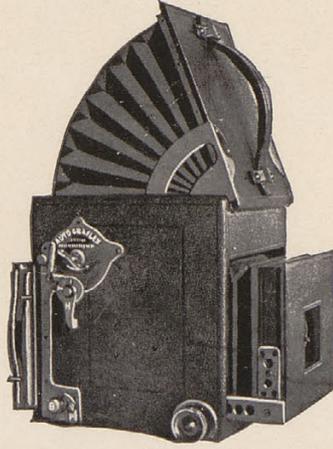
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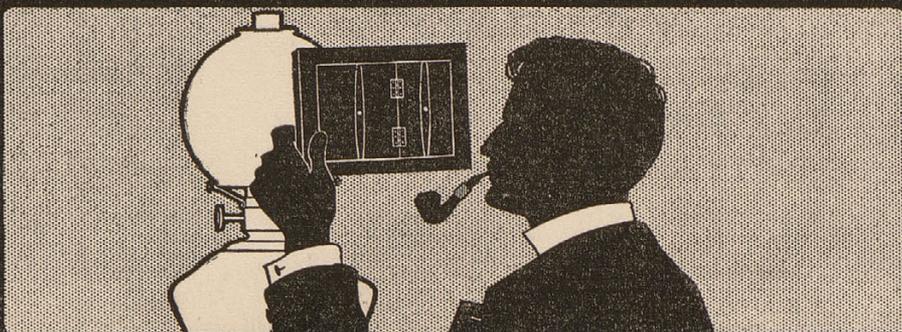
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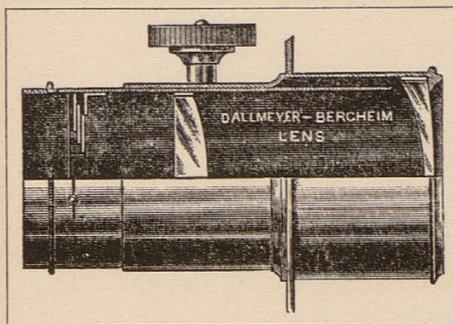
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