Photography and Silhouettes

Sir, - my new suggestion for the commercial development of photography is appropriate to your columns. I therefore ask you to let me address your readers on the subject of black silhouettes. They were very familiar to those who lived in the pre-photographic period. They were quickly cut out of paper by a deft hand with a small keen pair of scissors, and at least one of the many operators in this way ranked as an artist capable of making excellent likenesses. The paper was black on one side, and the silhouette that had been cut out was pasted then and there, with the black side upwards, upon a white card, and framed. A perfectly durable, and often a good likeness was thereby produced in a very short time. This art was superceded by photography, and is now temporarily extinct; but I want to show that it might with great facility - and, I think, with some profit in a humble way - be advantageously re-introduced by the help of the very agency that extinguished it.

I will explain what I myself did, beginning, as one always does, in the wrong way first, and afterwards getting right. I wanted, for some experimental purposes of my own, to obtain a large number of silhouettes; in fact, I wanted photographs of such cleanly-cut profiles as most persons have had occasion to see, of those who stand in a long dark passage between themselves and an only window at the end of it. I therefore arranged a makeshift dark tunnel. At one end was the camera; in front of the other end was a white sheet inclined to the light, and in the tunnel was the sitter for the time. As viewed in the camera, the appearance was that of a field of brilliant white, out of which was sharply cut so much as corresponded to the silhouette of the sitter's face. A rapid exposure sufficed, and I thereby got a white silhouette upon a black ground, which might be used as a negative to produce black silhouettes on a white ground. They served my own particular purpose perfectly, but they had not the clean and sharply-contrasted effect of the old silhouettes; so I cut some of them out of the paper and blackened them, and pasted them on cards. If I had blackened them with aniline ink, I could have produced popyrographed copies; or if I had greased them, and pressed them on stone or on zinc, the lithographer could have worked off copies by the hundred.

My suggestion lies in this last direction. It is, that the photographer, without taking any trouble to construct a tunnel as I did, should photograph on paper the profile of the sitter, either in strong light against a dark background, or vice versa; to develop sufficiently to see the image clearly, and then to wash for a second, but not to fix, and rapidly to dry it in the dark; next in full, but somewhat non-actinic light, to quickly cut out the silhouette before the image has time to fade; lastly, to (a) blacken the silhouette, dry and mount it; or (b) grease it, press it on a small lithographic surface, and thence to take as many prints as are desired. The whole of the latter process need occupy very few minutes, and the sitter could walk away in possession of his or her likenesses.
Now the merits of this plan are; that no artistic, and little photographic skill is required; there is no need for a careful adjustment of exposure of lights, and of position, or of accessories; there is no necessity for careful development. The carrying out of the process requires no skill except so far as the cutting out is concerned, which any neat-handed person can soon learn to do quickly and well. The arrangements for rapid drying, and for the various printing operations, might be of the humblest description, and yet a really useful and pleasing likeness might be turned out, far superior in value to the commoner kind of photographs, and to not a few of the more costly ones. The rapidity and cheapness with which lithographed copies could be supplied would be incomparably superior to anything that photography can effect. The cost of outfit for experimentalising, if a lithographer can be induced to help in the first instance, does not exceed that of a pair of sharp lace-cutting scissors; and it would, I think, be well worth the while of an enterprising photographer who is slack of work to attempt to establish and supply a demand for prettily-mounted silhouettes.

Francis Galton.

Photographic News, July 23, 1887

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Photography and Silhouettes.

Sir, - In reply to your request I enclose an average silhouette, which I cut from an ordinary print taken from the original negative. Neater fingers than mine would have cut it out better. Sometimes I have cut out the silhouettes from prints as soon as they were removed from the printing frame, and left them to blacken; they suited my particular purpose, but it is needless to say that their tint was not agreeable. I have sometimes printed them as "blues" (cyanide prints) on the paper used by architects, and these are very effective.

Silhouette [image]

Those who are acquainted with Lavater's original work, of which the small English translation is little better than a caricature, will understand the value of well-made silhouettes. They are particularly useful in studying family characteristics, which, I think, are, on the average, far better observed in profiles than in any other one view of the features. The truth of this statement may be verified in church, where whole families, each occupying a pew, can often be seen sideways, and each family can be taken in and its members compared with a single glance. The instances will be found numerous in which the profiles of the family are curiously similar, especially those of the mother and
her daughters. This is most noticeable where their ages and bodily shapes differ greatly, as when the daughters are partly children and partly slim girls, and the mother is not slim at all.

Permit me to take this opportunity of disclaiming a misprint in the very first word of my letter the week before last. It was printed "My"; it should have been "Any." The effect of the "My" is to give a tone of presumption to what I wished to say, quite foreign to my real intention.

Francis Galton
Correspondence.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND SILHOUETTE.

Sir,—I am free to write you that the commercial development of photography is appropriate to your columns. I therefore ask you to let me address your readers on the subject of black silhouette. They have been sometimes familiar to those who worked in the pre-photographic period. They were very familiar to those who worked in the pre-photographic period. They were very familiar to those who worked in the pre-photographic period. They were quickly cut out of paper by a dark hand with a small piece of scissors, and at least one of the many operators in this way ranked as an artist capable of making excellent likenesses. The paper was black on one side, and the silhouette that had been cut out was pasted upon white paper, and framed. It was a perfect, quick, and easy process. It was perfected by photography, and is now temporarily extinct; but I want to show that it might be with great facility—and, I think, with some profit in a humble way—be advantageously re-introduced by the help of the very agency that extinguished it.

I will explain what I mean! I did, beginning, as one always does, in the wrong way first, and afterwards getting right. I wanted, for some experimental purposes of my own, to obtain a large number of silhouettes; in fact, I wanted photographs of much cleanly-cut profiles as most persons have had occasion to see, of those who stand in a long dark passage between themselves and the light at the end of it. I therefore arranged a makeshift dark tunnel. At one end was the camera; in front of the other and was a white sheet inclined to the light, and in the tunnel was the sitter for the time. As viewed in the camera, the appearance was that of a field of brilliant white, out of which was sharply cut as much as corresponded to the silhouette of the sitter's face. A rapid exposure sufficed, and I thereby got a white silhouette upon a black ground, which might be used as a negative to produce black silhouettes on a white ground. They served my own particular purpose perfectly, but they had not the clear and sharply-contrasted effect of the old silhouettes; so I cut some of them out of the paper and blackened them, and pasted them on cards. If I had blackened them withiline ink, I could have produced papier-collé copies; or if I had tinted them, and pressed them on stone or on zinc, the lithographer could have worked off copies by the hundred.

My suggestion lies in this last direction. It is, that the photographer, without taking any trouble to construct a tunnel as I did, should photograph on paper the profile of the sitter, either in strong light, or through a dark background or you could; to develop materials I used to the image clearly, and then to wash for a second, but not to fix, and rapidly to dry it in the dark; next, in full, but somewhat non-saturating light, I quickly cut out the silhouette before the image has time to fade; lately, to (a) blanch the silhouette, dry and mount it; or (b) grease it, press it on a small lithographic surface, and thereon to take as many prints as are desired. The whole of the latter process need occupy very few minutes, and the sitter could walk away in possession of this or her likeness.

Now the merits of this plan are, that it is artistic, and little photographic skill is required; there is no need for a careful adjustment of exposure of lights, and of positions, or of accessories; there is no necessity for careful development. The carrying out of the process requires no skill on the part of the photographer, as the cutting out is conducted when any two-handed person can be employed to cut the negative. The arrangements for rapid drying, and for the various printing operations, might be of the simplest description; and the beauty, ease, and rapidity of the process might be increased still further, by the substitution of any photographic, and to a few of the more easily taken. The rapidity and cheapness which I think
Proceedings of Societies.

LONDON AND PROVINCIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION.

A meeting was held on the 20th ult., A. MACHER in the chair. The Hon. Secretary proposed the adjournment of the business of the Annual Meeting for four weeks, when he hoped several members who had gone to the Convention would have returned. This course was adopted, and technical matters were considered. The causes and prevention of streaks at the centre of plates were discussed.

W. E. Dumasok said it would not occur if the plates were packed closely and hermetically sealed. The marks could be removed by rubbing gently with water.

The Chairman used a pad of cloth moistened with turpentine, and in a bath prepared for the use of a solvent to the end of the plates a couple of hours and a few dry days, after which the print was removed from the plate by scraping it with the edges of a piece of paper parallel to the plate. This prolonged process was necessary, and the plate was never known to fall.

Before passing on to fixing paper negatives followed. The manner of preparing hypermolybdate of silver was recommended, from eight ounces to one pound of salt to each plate of water; drying in air before pasting on adhesive paper in the case of certain objects.

Removing paper negatives from the binders was then talked about; succeed in this process being favoured by various processes, and a question was then asked about the difficulties of the latter process in the case of certain objects.

Wm. B. Pinto was presented with a watch and an appointment to be given to a member of the Society. The Astronomer Royal was thanked.

The Adjournment of the meeting was then adjourned.

LIVERPOOL AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION.

The monthly meeting was held on the 20th ult., at the Bury Hotel, in the chair. The Hon. Secretary was elected a member.

The Secretary distributed the tercentenary of the exhibition of the Royal Photographic Society of Ireland; it also made a letter from the Secretary of the Royal Meteorological Society for photographs of lightning flashes, and calling the attention of amateur photographers generally to the subject.

R. C. White remarked that he believed he had taken the first film negative in existence of a lightning flash, and would be pleased to let the Meteorological Society see it. He was furnished with some negatives, and his researches were not a single lens with aperture not exceeding 1/16, on the ground that the lightning flash is quite sufficient to impress itself with the smaller aperture, whereas with the larger aperture the flash will be seen.
Photographic instrument A, pivoted in its optical centre, or axis, in combination with sensitive film located within the focus of the lens on a circle struck from the optical centre or pivot of the instrument, substantially as and for the purpose specified.

7. A photographic instrument A, pivoted in its optical centre or axis, in combination with a sensitive film located within the focus of the lens on a circle struck from the optical centre or pivot of the instrument, is combination with a narrow passage way located between the lens and its focus, and means to revolve with the instrument, substantially for the purpose herebefore explained.

EXHIBITION.—Photographing in paper machines. —Dated August 3rd, 1894.

The claim is for details of exposing machine of the Fontana type.

19786. JOHN URSI, Sen., and JOHN URSI, jun., both of 83, Jameson Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Photographers, assignors to Josephine Lester and Nina Laidley, both of same place. "Process of producing designs on glass plates."

—Filed September 8, 1894. Serial No. 111,829. (No model.

Claim.—1. The heretofore-described process of producing designs on glass plates, consisting of a glass plate having a permanent coating consisting principally of Egyptian asphalt, coal-tar, blucher come of potassium, mucilage, and camphor, and then placing a pattern of the design to be produced on the said plate, after which the plate and its pattern are exposed to the action of light, and the pattern is removed, and the plate is washed in water, substantially as described.

2. A new article of manufacture, consisting of a glass plate having a permanent coating consisting principally of Egyptian asphalt, coal-tar, blucher come of potassium, mucilage, and camphor, and then placing a pattern of the design to be produced on the said plate, after which the plate and its pattern are exposed to the action of light, and the pattern is removed, and the plate is washed in water, substantially as described.

3. The heretofore-described composition of matter used for producing designs on glass plates, consisting of Egyptian asphalt, coal-tar, blucher come of potassium, mucilage, gum-arabic, camphor, charcoal, and temperments or beuizy, in the proportions specified.

Photography and Silhouettes.

Dear Sir,—F. Gilton's letter reminded me of my own attempts about two years ago, one of which I mention. It may be considered under-printed, also over-exposed. To

Correspondence.

Those who are acquainted with Lavater's original work, of which the small English translation is little better than a caricature, will understand the value of well-made silhouettes. They are particularly useful in studying family characteristics, which, I think, are, on the average, far better observed in profiles than in any other one view of the features. The truth of this statement is verified in church, where whole families, each occupying a pew, can often be seen sideways, and each family can be taken in and its members compared with a simple glance. The instances will be found numerous in which the profiles of a family are curiously similar, especially those of the mother and her daughters. This is most noticeable where their ages and bodily shapes differ greatly, as when the daughters are partly children and partly slim girls, and the mother is not slim at all.

I shall now take this opportunity of disclaiming a misprint in the very first word of my letter the week before last. It was printed "My"; it should have been "Any." The effect of the "My" is to give a tone of presumption to what I wished to say, quite foreign to my real intention.

FRANCIS GALLOW.

PROCEEDINGS OF SOCIETY.

Photographic Society of Great Britain.

DEAR SIR,—F. Gilton's letter reminded me of my own attempts about two years ago, one of which I mention. It may be considered under-printed, also over-exposed. To

A. H. CARE.

Corvallis, Oregon, July 14.