

PURPOSE IN PHOTOGRAPHY.

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Purpose in any thing not only increases the chances of success, but is absolutely essential to its attainment; and in proportion as it is wanting or present will be the degree of failure or success. This is not only true of matters in general; it applies to photography in particular.

What is the object of photography? To many it is simply to secure by its means a certain number of photographs of things and places. And if these are good, or excellent, technically, they are considered as having fulfilled the purpose of the operator. Others have a still higher idea—the delineation of objects according to the rules of art. But they in turn, are wanting in the still advanced aim of others who strive after the ability to express their thoughts, feelings and fancies by means of photography.

Passing by those of the first-class, —who will in time grow out of their insipient stage—it is surprising how little purpose is manifested by the others, who comprise, perhaps, the vast majority of those that make photographs. They have tried to master thoroughly all the technical knowledge and experience necessary to taking pictures; and they would consider themselves, or others, extremely foolish, if they attempted to photograph any thing without this fundamental knowledge or ability. But here they have stopped. They have never studied the rules of art; or, if so, have obtained but a meager idea of them. They are governed entirely by their own tastes, or by the vague impressions formed from examining, or perhaps studying, to some extent,

the productions of painters, or it may be only the illustrations to be found in books and periodicals. If these have produced a favorable effect upon them, they are unable to tell why it was so, or the cause for it. They photograph views founded upon this knowledge—not knowing beforehand just what they are going to produce; in other words, devoid of purpose—and, after they are printed and mounted, they begin to think of titles for them. Instead of working with an object, they do their work and then cast about for a purpose. To present it differently, they are prepared by previous study and thought to take a photograph, and carry it through its various stages to a point where it may be preserved; but they are almost entirely unfitted to make a picture, worthy of the name, because they have not previously acquired the information they must possess in order to do it intelligently and properly.

The great majority of pictures one sees in exhibitions or competitions either show no purpose in their creation, or are the result of accident. If it were not for the catalogue, or an appended title, one would have to “imagine a vain thing.” They mostly appear as if the photographer had had a leisure day, and during an outing had taken any thing, or every thing that struck his fancy as pretty or interesting, and after his offsprings were born, had given each names—calling a puny sickly thing Goliath, and a tall and vigorous one Zaccheus!

This custom is too prevalent. If amateurs would abandon such methods, and work from a well-defined and definite purpose, the cause of