

and indeed wherever a few hundreds of people congregate, there also is the professional photographer, and in numbers far in excess of what there is full employment for. The supply has far exceeded the demand with the inevitable result of lowering its value, till, as I have already said, the prices are in many, very many cases, little better than a meagre profit on the cost of the material employed.

Is there a cure for this state of matters? I think there is, or I would not have bothered you with its diagnosis. I have said that the various processes involved in the production of, say an albumen print, are now so simple that anyone of average ability may, after a few lessons, or a very little practice, do work as good as the average of the wet collodion period. That is a clear, clean, recognizable likeness, it may be, burnished till it reflects like a mirror, and technically perfect in every respect. In the early days, while a photograph was a curiosity, nothing more was expected, but something more is required now, required at least by the more cultured of the people who are willing to pay for it. The successful photographers are those who supply this demand: those who, while giving due attention to the technique of photography, seek after and generally find something higher and better than a mere likeness; those whose every photograph is a picture into which they manage to introduce more or less of the individuality both of themselves and their sitters. Some men are born to this as poets are born, and others acquire it only through long, patient, persevering study, and its possession places them out of the range of that demoralizing competition which has brought the professional practice of the art to its present state.

But when things come to the worst,

they will begin to mend; and already there are symptoms of the approach of better times. So long as a large section of the public are satisfied with such work as is at present being done, the ranks of the profession will continue to be crowded by those whose aim does not go beyond the dollars that it brings; but, thanks to higher education and the influence of an admirably illustrated literature, the taste and culture of that public are rapidly reaching a higher plane, and the time is gradually approaching when it will be with photographers as it is with all other classes—that the weaker will go to the wall.

The doctrine of the survival of the fittest may seem to you, my professional friends, a very harsh one, but it is as everlastingly true as is that of supply and demand, under which you now suffer. Nor, while accepting it as inevitable, need you regard it with dismay, as there is no reason why you should not be strong rather than weak; why you should not be found amongst the survivors. You may not be a born artist, but if you have not mistaken your calling, you may acquire all that is necessary to success.

Begin by carefully studying every picture you come across—paintings, engravings, and book and magazine illustrations. Some you will like, while others will seem unsatisfactory. Try to discover why you like the one and dislike the other, subjecting each line and light to analysis till you have discovered the scheme on which the composition was based, or are satisfied that the artist wrought untied by any scheme. Acquire a thorough knowledge of the so-called canons of art, or laws of composition; not to slavishly follow them, but to prevent your committing such palpable blunders as are