

## Trimming.

IN response to the editor's request to write a practical article, I have selected the above subject, incited thereto by the appearance of the "natural rock bridge," as the illustration in the December number of THE CANADIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNAL.

By "trimming," I do not mean simply the orthodox removal of the rough edges and the squaring of the print, but the heroic application of the scissors for the removal of every portion that will improve the composition and appearance of what is left. While it is true that every true artist is a law unto himself, it is equally true that there are certain canons or laws that cannot be disregarded without injury to the composition. Amongst those, the more important are (a) the necessity for a suitable foreground, in which something shall lead the eye to the *motif* of the picture; (b) concentration, which means that there must be one central object or group of objects to which the rest of the composition shall be subservient; and that that point of interest must be in one or other of the strong points of the picture, or, in other words, never in the weak parts; by weak parts of the picture are understood those that would be cut by straight lines drawn in the middle from top to bottom, and from side to side, the strongest points being those a little to the right or left of the lower perpendicular, and the next in strength those a little to the right and left of the upper perpendicular; (c) the vanishing point, or horizon line, should also be placed on one or other of the strongest points, that is, as near as may be on a level with the eye at the point from which the picture was taken. In landscapes this may be, under certain conditions, placed on the less strong points,

above the horizontal line, but in marine work never, as it gives to the water the appearance of an inclined plane, with ships sailing up or down hill.

To the artist of the brush it is an easy matter to observe those canons in his composition, but to him of the camera it is often difficult. He may select the picture with the unerring instinct of a trained seer, but in trying to get the object of interest in a strong point, finds an ugly object in an undesirable place, or from the only available point of view, not only gets all he wants, but much that he would be much better without. This latter fault is at the present time more general than in former days, in consequence of the more general employment of short focus lenses, a very common practice being to use a lens not longer than the base line of the picture, instead of one twice that length, as was the common thing then.

The result is, that in looking over an average collection of landscape photographs, no matter by whom, as the professional is as great a sinner as the amateur, not one in ten will be found to possess the true pictorial qualities which depend on the observance of those canons; while, at the same time, there may not be one to which they could not have been given by a proper application of the scissors.

The average photographer, guided by circumstances, adopts a plate of a certain size, selects his pictures to the best of his ability, and trims them as close as possible to the white margin left by the plate holder; and when showing them to his friends, apologizes for this tree, that unseemingly obstruction, or any other objectionable feature, altogether oblivious to the fact that a snip with the scissors would have made a picture that needed no apology.