

degradation. It is still, in the hands of some, as honorable and as profitable as any of the other professions, in all of which there are some at the bottom as well as some at the top ; the difference between photography and other professions being that, while in them the many are at the top, or well up, in photography the well-up are but a favored few.

There must be a cause for this state of matters, and in looking for it I know that some of you, too many indeed, think you find it in the almost omnipresent amateur, but it is there where you make the mistake. The amateur, from Daguerre and Talbot down to the latest button presser, has been photography's, and consequently the professional photographer's, best friend. He has improved old and introduced new processes, reduced the time of setting for a sun portrait from, say, ten minutes in blazing sunshine under a blue glass to a fraction of a second in a comfortable, diffused-lighted studio, and so popularized the art that he is poor indeed who cannot surround himself with pictures of the loved ones, although scattered to "a" the air the wind can blow."

It is no doubt true that there are a few amateurs who seek to derive some pecuniary benefit from their hobby—to make sufficient to supply them with material, which, from their limited income, they could not otherwise get ; but any harm that they thus do to the professional does not even amount to the proverbial drop in the bucket. The impetuous amateur who makes, or tries to make, his hobby pay for itself is both legally and morally entitled so to do, and the professional photographer who fears such competition, or supposes that the placing of a shingle over his door gives him the right to prevent it, shows

a sad lack of confidence in his own ability and a fruitless grasping after an unreasonable power. Some of them have indeed gone so far as to propose that the State should take a hand in the suppression of the amateur, and limit the professional practice of the art to such as held diplomas or certificates from certain recognized sources, as is the case with the practice of medicine and law, forgetting that, while the doctor and lawyer have to do with the life and liberty of the people, the photographer merely caters to its pleasure. But supposing it were possible to turn back the wheels of progress and revert to the times of monopolies and guilds, the granting of diplomas or certificates would imply examinations, and from a pretty extensive acquaintance with both professionals and amateurs, I can say with confidence that the former, or rather the complaining section of them, would not be at the head.

But while the amateur does not to any appreciable extent interfere with the professional photographer, he has indirectly helped materially to bring about the present admittedly bad state of matters, he has opened the door too wide and made the approach so easy that too many have entered in. In the days when wet collodion was king, and the vagaries of the bath tried the patience and needed all the skill of the trained operator, an apprenticeship of three, four, and sometimes five years, was not considered an unreasonable preparation for an assistant, much less for one who was to go into the business for himself ; while now, in consequence of the simplification of the various processes, work equal to the average of those days may be, and frequently is, turned out after a few lessons, or the practice of a few weeks. The consequence is that in our towns and villages