

ARTISTIC PHOTOGRAPHY.

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(Continued from last issue.)

The ellipse, like the circle, is bounded by one line whose direction is continually varying, but differs from it by the fact that there is continual variation in the variation. Hence it is superior to the circle for artistic composition.

Having travelled so far let us see where we stand. We have analyzed the various forms that are suitable for pictorial composition and have found that we may classify them as follows: first, pyramidal; second, diagonal; third, diamond; fourth, circular; fifth, elliptical. Now for their application.

The diagonal form of composition is emphatically the basis of all landscape work, founded on the fact that all retiring lines appear to ascend or descend as they happen to be below or above the level of the eye. You can readily recall many instances of this. A country road, the banks of a river, the seashore, the margin of a lake, all seem to ascend as they retire, while the eaves of a house, the tops of a row of trees appear to descend. All the other forms of composition may be used with advantage in figure studies and groups. The pyramid is the simplest and I think the best; the diamond is practically the pyramidal, for it is only the heads that can possibly outline the diamond, and if we include the bodies the base is a straight line and the pyramid is complete.

Circular composition is practically of no utility, as the human eye cannot possibly see any figures in that shape, unless it be viewing them from a balloon. It is possible to conceive of a group of deities, angels or fairies floating in atmosphere in that form, but that is something beyond the scope of

the camera, and we can only mention it to dismiss it.

But the elliptical form of composition is different. A circle in perspective is an ellipse to the eye, but the chances of seeing a group in such arrangement are very few, and so it is practically outside the field of the photographer's interest.

The matter is becoming narrowed down considerably until you will begin to think that after all there is nothing left. In fact nothing remains but the pyramidal and diagonal forms of composition, and what I want to impress upon your minds is this, that the elementary principles of composition are after all very simple, and that there is really no excuse for the enormous amount of photographic work one sees in which there is not shown even a rudimentary knowledge of the subject.

It is now time for us to make another step forward. Supposing I draw a triangle on a piece of paper, would I show much taste if I made two of its lines coincide with the margins of the paper? Not one of you would do such a thing, but would leave a clear border all around the figure, the width of which would depend upon your taste. So in the same way you would place the triangular form of your composition upon the paper in such a way that there would be a margin, not clear paper certainly, but still of uninteresting matter, round your composition.

Now the eye naturally runs along lines, and where two lines meet is perforce a very important point in the picture, and is the spot where an object of interest should be placed. This is the explanation of the old, old rule in art that the strong points of a picture are situated about one-third or one-fourth from the edge of the paper, and that the very weakest point is exactly