

view them through a piece of glass—the half-plate size—divided into three parts each way, placing the intersections as much as possible over those parts in nature which are important. The same lines may be drawn on the focussing screen when it is of the proportions I have described. This would enable the photographer to place the intersections on special parts of a scene—such as a ruin, a tree, a river, a boat, a group of cattle, figures, important parts of architecture and interiors generally."

The two corresponding strong points should not be used in the same picture.

This method of division, for the purpose of finding the strong and weak points of a picture, becomes fanciful when carried out to its extreme limits, but if the broad principle is borne in mind, it will save the student from admitting the formality into his composition and help him to get variety.

In the arranging of the masses of a landscape an important element of success is the power of selection, both of the view and the standpoint from which it is to be taken, for it is upon this last-mentioned point that the composition of our foregrounds is almost wholly dependent. Those people are indeed fortunate who are naturally gifted with that kind of taste which at once enables them to perceive those combinations and effects in Mother Nature's grouping of objects, which will make the most agreeable and at the same time the most effective pictures, but it is indeed few who are so favored, and in most cases of the kind the innate good taste of the operator is after all but a poor substitute for a practical knowledge of the laws of composition.

Those who are not naturally blessed with a full share of the artistic feeling may take courage in the saying of Sir Joshua Reynolds: "Nothing is denied to well-directed labor; nothing is to be obtained without it;" and if they give their earnest attention to their work, need have no fear of not attaining at least a certain amount of excellence.

Far too often in looking at a photogram the feeling is present that the artist might have given us a little less fact and a few more pictorial qualities; that he did not keep before him the idea that all photography is divided into two classes, photography where microscopic definition of every blade of grass, every door and window, every brick or board, is looked for, and photography where high pictorial merit for decorative purposes is desired. Every day we are bored by being shown landscapes that are of no account whatever unless it be that they possess interesting associations to those who take them, and even so, in ninety out of a hundred cases, a little judgment coupled with some knowledge of the rules of composition, would have resulted in a very perceptible improvement in the pictorial qualities and still show every necessary detail. If we do not keep this constantly before us and endeavor to do our best in our every-day work, when the object becomes the making of a picture, which from its intrinsic qualities will rank it as a work of art more or less, how can we hope to do better?

It will hardly do then in deciding to photograph some familiar spot, to walk from it about forty or fifty paces, set up the camera, focus and snap it, and be only certain that our dry plate has had the correct exposure and as a consequence must bear an impression of the scene that is at least recognizable if not artistic in its arrangement. We must move around the scene from point to point until we can find a spot from whence the landscape is seen at its very best angle, "where Nature spreads before us her unfettered charms." After all the fore-

ground has perhaps more influence on the appearance of our photogram than any other part of the landscape and our first aim must be to make it compose in the best possible manner, without sacrificing any part of the main object of the view. Suppose that we desire to secure a negative of a farmhouse that possesses some interest connected with our personal history, or possibly for other reasons. We may be told by the critic, who prates of art with a big "A," that the offensive lines of the building will set at defiance all our attempts at the picturesque, but at the same time he most likely forgets that nothing can be more characteristic of the life of different parts of the country than the homes in which the people live. What is more rich in history than a tid-bit of its architecture? At first glance, no doubt, the lines are somewhat crude and offensive, but a little search will generally reveal a point whence they may be made to compose well with a roadway, a hillside, a clump of trees, or something else, and usually if sufficient care is taken in the exact placing of the camera and the proper light used, all the effective points of the foreground may be saved. What is wanted is self-education of the eye, the power to see the picture in the material before you, the arm, the shape, the limitations of the subject, until by intuition one seizes the vantage point.

Having arrived at a point when we have found some elements of a good picture, let us start to compose them by moving from point to point, so that we get our distance open and our main groups on either side about one-third from the side boundary of the plate, but let the group on one side be more important than on the other. No more picturesque contrast can be secured than a full, rich mass of foliage balancing a mass of gnarled and twisted vines. For variety in our foreground we can use bare earth, patches of vegetation, rocks, stumps, old logs, in fact, almost anything but flat, unbroken stretches of grass or earth. Then here, too, should be some important feature of interest, either suitable figures or cattle, or something of striking form, or light and shadow, not precisely in the centre, but a little either to one side or the other. It is seldom that such points can be placed down in the corners without carrying the eye too far from the centre of the work and in a large measure spoiling the picture.

Frequently it is desirable to take a view with the camera close to the ground in order to foreshorten the foreground. Imagine yourself looking at a river—an eyot with tall trees is on your left, the farther bank slopes gently to the water. In the fields beyond, toward the middle distance and near the right of the view, are one or two cottages. The faint line of distant hills bounds the prospect. At our feet the grass is broken into irregular patches and a tall clump of bullrushes are on the extreme right. Focus the view with the camera at the usual height. If you include the foreground you cut off the sky and the subject is divided into two by the broad stretch of uninteresting river; cut off the foreground and you have a narrow strip of picture sandwiched between the white sky and the white river. In neither case is the view worth taking. Now retire a step or two, lower the camera within a foot or two of the ground, raise the sliding front to cut off the immediate superfluous foreground and mark the difference. The water is reduced to a mere strip, broken by the taller tufts of grass and dock leaves. The clump of rushes gives strength to the right-hand side and the distance is thrown still farther back by the bold foreground. Water, meadow, fenland and the foreshore of tidal estuaries may be dealt with in the same manner to advantage.