THE TANNIN PROCESS

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BY

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SECOND EDITION.

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SINCE the publication of the first edition the process described in it has been greatly improved. The substratum of gelatine may now be dispensed with, far greater sensitiveness can be obtained, and, which is more important, landscape views can at the same time be produced of better quality.

The process as managed at first had one serious fault, which rendered it less suitable for ordinary landscapes than for some other kinds of subjects; the use of tannin is, however, attended by many and great advantages, and the author has used his best endeavours to find the means of correcting the fault alluded to, and to improve the process in other respects. He hopes that it will now be found to be more generally useful.

For the original ideas which have led to some of the greatest improvements the writer is indebted to the experience of others.

The contents of the first edition have been carefully revised and in great part re-written, and much new matter has been added. Perhaps the most important addition is a way of working in which considerable advantages are gained by the use of bromide alone, without iodine or any of its combinations. Many variations in treatment are given to be chosen from, and nearly every means supposed to increase the sensitiveness of dry plates, and many modifications of the tannin process, have been tested and the results described in this edition.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE writer has, during the last five years, expended much time and trouble in endeavouring to discover a really good dry collodion process. Having tried every published method which seemed at all promising, he finds that, although nearly all will produce good results if properly managed, yet none are entirely satisfactory.

The principal faults of the moist preservative processes are—great insensitiveness, unless an amount of nitrate of silver incompatible with long keeping in hot weather be retained in the film; a difficulty in producing uniform sensitiveness, from the varying quantity of this free nitrate of silver; and a liability to suffer from dust adhering to the surface of

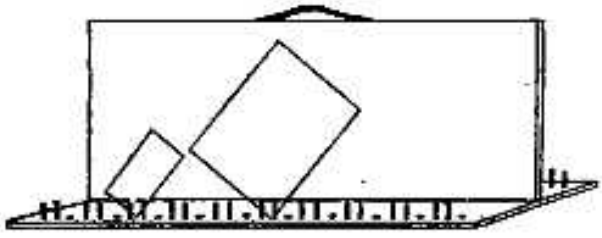
the collodion and causing spots. The dry processes hitherto published, besides many other faults belonging to them individually, have one in common—that of being too much dependent for success upon the mechanical state of the collodion.

The process to be described in the following pages is free from the last-mentioned objection, and from many others which attach to other dry processes generally. Although all the experiments necessary to ascertain precisely the best mode of working have not as yet been completed, especially as regards the means of obtaining the greatest degree of sensitiveness, yet it is hoped that the description now given will be found sufficient for practical purposes, and that the conclusions which the author draws from his own experiments will not mislead.

CHAPTER I.

ON CLEANING THE PLATES.

A DRAINING-STAND, which will be found very useful throughout this and other dry processes, may be made in the following manner:—Take a thin board, a little more than three feet long and nine inches broad, and nail another board, sixteen inches in width, vertically along the middle of the first. Bore vertical holes,



about one and a half inches apart, along near the edges of the first or horizontal board: fit a number of wooden pegs about two inches long into these holes, to be used in pairs, in adjacent holes, at such distances as may be required by the size of the glasses used. Nail a leathern strap to serve as a handle on the middle of the upper edge of the vertical board.

This stand may be of any convenient size: that just described will take ten stereoscopic plates on each side, set up diagonally on the corners, and is high enough to drain 12 × 10 glasses in the same position.

If the plates have been used before, remove the old films by soaking for a short time in a warm solution of carbonate of soda (common washing soda). The plates should be removed from this liquid as soon as the film will come off easily, or the glass may be corroded. The edges may be detached with a knife or with the finger nail, and the remainder of the film rubbed off with the fingers or a hard brush. Then put the plates into a vessel of water, and, having carried them to a pump or tap, wash in a stream of water, taking care to remove every piece of old film which may remain, and place the glasses on one end, nearly close to the vertical part of the draining-stand, their tops resting against it, the glasses being about half an inch apart. When one row is complete, place the glasses in the next row so that the middle of each covers the interval between two in the first row, that a vent may be left for the escape of damp air upwards. Many dozens of plates may thus be drained at once on the two sides of the stand. Carry the stand into a warm room, and place it before the fire, tilting up one end about six inches to let the water drain away from the lower ends of the glasses. Unless wanted for immediate use, it will not be found worth while to