

THE NEXT NEW THING.

MAKING PHOTOGRAPHS IN BRILLIANT COLORS.

Will Be Done Before Long The Only Trouble Remaining Is to Fix the Tints - Advantages to Be Gained - Polarized Light.

There is not the least doubt in my mind that the problem of photographing colors will be solved before long, said an eminent expert, Mr. Smilie, of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, to anticipate that within the next 10 years this long sought object will be attained. At present the most distinguished experimenters in photography all over the world are engaged upon the subject, and already they have arrived at partially successful results. There is one Frenchman who claims that he has actually discovered a successful process, though others dispute his assertion.

You must understand that photographing in colors is, in one sense, no new thing. As early as the days of the daguerrotype it was sometimes accomplished by accident. That is to say, once in a while the sun picture would be found to have reproduced a color in some mysterious way that no one knew how to explain. It has since been surmised that the curious result was due to a trace of copper that got into the sensitive surface. At all events, copper has been used in efforts to get color since, and with some degree of success. However, it has not been found much better for the purpose of use chloride of silver, which is made, by exposure to light for a certain time, sensitive to color waves. But the trouble has been with experiments in this line that the colors would not remain. They can be produced usually now, but how to fix them is the difficulty, so that they will stay. Nevertheless, before very long the secret will be such no longer, I expect, and portraits and other pictures will be painted in colors by the camera.

A great improvement has recently been introduced in the shape of "autographic" plates, made with a new chemical composition, which, though they do not reproduce the colors actually, do give in a way that they have never hitherto been given, the "values" of the colors of objects. To explain what I mean, look at those two photographs of a vase full of flowers. The vase was in light yellow and the bouquet was made up of yellow, blue, white, and white. One of the photographs is from an ordinary plate, and you will observe that all the color values are lost. The narcissus comes out white, because it is white; but the yellow vase is made black, for the reason that yellow flows to black; the jonquils are nearly black, also, and the hyacinths look anything but blue. Now, on the other hand, look at the other photograph, which is of the same vase and bouquet from an "autographic" plate. You see that in the latter, though no colors are produced, the tints are so well given by the shading that the narcissus really look blue and the hyacinths and the vase light yellow, as in the original. This you can not help admiring is in itself a great step ahead.

Color photography would be a great help to us in our work of making photographs of sections of rocks. In the so-called "lithological division" of the National Museum we try to exhibit the various rocks of the world in four ways. We show, first, a block of a particular kind of stone. Next, we give in figures the supporting strength of that stone. Third, we offer a picture in water colors, showing how a building made of that stone will look. And finally we hang up on the window, where the light shines through it, a greatly magnified section of the stone as it is seen under a microscope by polarized light. For this last purpose a small piece of rock is ground down until it is the thinnest possible transparent film. A ray of light is passed through a prism of Iceland spar, which has the peculiar property of separating the light waves as to "polarize" the light, as the technical phrase is. Precisely the meaning of this it would take too long to explain in detail, but it is sufficient to say that it has a certain effect of refraction which accomplishes the purpose I wish to describe.

The ray of light, having gone through the prism of Iceland spar, passes on through the film of rock, which is mounted on a glass plate, and beyond through a microscope, the other end of which is fitted into a camera. Thus a very much magnified image of the rock section is thrown upon the sensitive plate inside the camera and a big picture of it is made. The picture is merely in black and white, but the image produced on the ground glass at the back of the camera is in all sorts of beautiful colors, each element of which the stone is composed being made by the refracting effect of the polarized light to take on a tint of its own, so that the least pretty bit of ordinary cobblestone is a patchwork of lovely hues. As it is we are obliged to tint the photographs with water colors, posted after the image on the ground glass; but, if we had a way to photograph colors, the exquisitely tinted pictures of the stones could be obtained directly.

If you care to look at the windows in the south wing of the museum, which light the lithological exhibition, you will see a number of these colored photomicrographs just as they would appear to your eye if you looked at the originals through a microscope. They are put up on the windows in order that the light may shine through them and show their transparency, exactly as would be the case if you were employing a microscope for the examination of the sections.

Some Characteristics of New Orleans. A visitor in New Orleans says that there are three features of the life in the Creole City that are sure to impress the stranger forcibly. They are the cemeteries, which are veritable flower gardens; the language of the French residents, which is spoken everywhere and as the pure Parisian accent, and the fact that the negroes on the lower river sing the old negro songs that were in slavery days.

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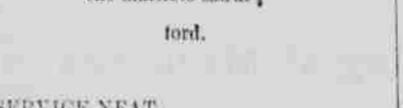
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