



THE BOY IN THE ARCH, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY DELAMOTTE.

THE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE OF ART.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A FINE ART.

LIMITED as the powers of photography are, at present, to the representation of form by the agency of light and shade only, photographic pictures possess a *severity of truth* which renders them invaluable as a means of accustoming the eye to accuracy of outline, and fidelity of light and shade. Colour cheats the eye to a great degree in its perception of form; therefore we hope that the so-much coveted discovery of the means of producing images in their natural colours, may be delayed until the more important result of training the eye to the appreciation of correct form has been accomplished.

The necessity for this education of the eye, both on the part of the artist and the public, must be evident to every one who can skilfully criticise the artistic productions which cover the walls of our exhibitions; it will be seen that amid the crowd of *painters* the good draughtsman is the exception rather than the rule. And this deficiency arises from the ordinary practice of young artists, who, in their eagerness to make pictures, rush to colour before they can produce a really finished drawing; hence it is that neither this country nor England show more than three or four eminent lithographers who can compete with the crowds of the same class of artists to be found in France and Germany. And thus the public, seldom having an opportunity of seeing accurate drawing, accepts the bad with so much favour, because its falsehood is glossed over by meretricious colour: and further, it is incapable of detecting the gross distortions presented to view even in the pictures of many artists of note. A correct eye for the appreciation of form, as well as colour, is seldom found combined in the same individual; the former is capable of great improvement, while the latter, like an ear for music, cannot be acquired, although, when latent, it may be more or less correctly developed.

It will at once be evident that this art must come into antagonism with the pencil of the artist, and great has been the fear and consternation that the draughtsman's and painter's occupation was gone. It is said that photography is hated by artists, but if so, it can only be by those who are unworthy of their calling: an inferior mechanical artist may be jealous of such a rival, since it must compel him to be more faithful in his representations; but the artist with a true genius for his calling welcomes photography as a friend and ally; he will find scope enough beyond the limits of mechanical reproduction for the full play of his genius. Photography takes no liberties with nature, it never sacrifices truth to tricky effect. The light and shade in a photograph are not the less effective for being nature's own, and in nothing is this fact more evident or striking than in architectural views, when compared with an ordinary artist's sketch of the same structure. In the latter it is frequently difficult or impossible to make out the details of the ornamentation, in consequence of the conventional manner in which the artist delineates them; while, in the former, every variation of surface, the most delicate chiselling, and even the qualities of texture, are given with wonderful truth, which an examination by the microscope even confirms.

We are led to these remarks by an examination of the interesting collections of photographs now exhibiting both in this country and in England. Here we have collected into a focus the choicest productions of this wonderful art, contributed by practitioners of various countries, and fully representing the great state of perfection at which photography has arrived. Every department of art and nature is laid under contribution, and each adequately represented. Nature, animate and inanimate (the animals "taken unawares"); the leafless tree with its perplexing anatomy of branches and twigs, or crowned with its luxuriant foliage; the corn-field, the rural lane, the

copse and dell, the lofty battlemented castle or lowly cottage, the bridge, the stream, are mirrored before us with picturesque effect and microscopic fidelity. But the happiest sphere of its operations appears to us to be architecture. How striking the countless details of the Gothic cathedral, or the crumbling ruin, or distant city with its spires, turrets, and domes, or the nearer view with the portraiture of public buildings. Some of these views present charming *pictures*, the effect of which it would be impossible for art to improve. One of these views, simple in its subject ("The Boy in the Arch," photographed by Mr. Delamotte, an English artist), but most brilliant in effect, from its pleasing variety of light and shade, has so much merit that, by permission of the photographer, we have had it engraved for this Magazine, for which purpose it is extremely well suited; for while lacking those minute details which give so much value to certain representations, yet are so difficult to render by the artist's pencil, it has a sufficient breadth of *chiar'oscuro* to form a good picture. The boy, too, with his natural easy attitude, immediately attracts the eye, and imparts life to a scene which, without him, would lose much of its interest.

Among other architectural photographic views which we have seen, there are two, at least, which we cannot pass by without special mention: a view of "The Cathedral of Notre Dame," at Paris, and "The Hotel de Ville," in the same city. There are, doubtless, others of equal merit, but in them we recognise all the conditions we require to be fulfilled in admitting photographic pictures to the rank of works of art; for, be it observed, that there are two classes of photographers, the *mechanical* and the *artistic*: and the same object taken by two individuals will be insipid or interesting according to the amount of artistic feeling employed in taking the view. It is needless to observe that during almost every hour in the day the pictorial aspect of a building varies, owing to the state of the atmosphere, and to the play of the sun's rays upon its principal or lateral façades. The artistic photographer will select the hour for taking his view when the building is most picturesque; the mechanical photographer will take his view at any hour indifferently; but the resulting photograph will loudly proclaim by which of the two it was taken. It is just the same in the art of painting; the majority of pictures exhibit merely mechanical or technical skill: all the higher qualities demanded in a truly artistic production are to be found only in the works of the few; hence the majority of pictures pass through three periods or stages of existence—production, exhibition, oblivion; or, as has been quaintly remarked, through hell, purgatory, and paradise.

But to return to photography; beside its suitability for representing objects of the kind already named, there are also its applications to the delineation of sculptured works and portraits from life, and a wide field of usefulness in its power of reproducing *fac simile* copies of rare etchings and engravings, drawings, manuscripts, &c. In portraiture it has many advantages over the daguerreotype, and has nearly superseded it. In the multiplication of *fac simile* copies of etchings, we have some very choice specimens, in a portfolio of examples obtained from Rembrandt's works: indeed, almost every day yields its surprise in new applications of this magical art.

Although photography dates its existence but fourteen years back, its progress has been wonderfully rapid, considering upon how delicate and refined a series of observations its development is based. Continental photographers were far outstripping those of the land of its birth: within a few months its progress has been incredibly rapid; and this progress dates from the abandonment of Mr. Talbot's patent rights.