

A FEW HINTS TO NOVICES WITH THE CAMERA, BY CHARLES M. TAYLOR, JR.

"MUCH PHOTOGRAPHS ARE BAD"

(This is the first of a series of articles on amateur photography to be published in The Sunday Oregonian.)

THE author takes it for granted that the amateur has received his first lesson from the dealer who provided his camera and outfit. This lesson generally relates to the manner of putting the plates in the plate-holder and oral instructions as to the making of a picture. These brief directions can be given in the space of an hour. Dealers also generally have a dark-room or closet in their stores for the convenience of customers. In this interview the manipulation of the shutter for instantaneous and time exposures is likewise explained.

After this your troubles will come, and you will truly think: "How objection, how august; how complicated, how wonderful!"—the camera!

It has been absolutely an indisputable fact that, to be satisfied as a picture-taker, glass plates are preferable to the roll films, but my experience would seem to contradict this assertion, for I have carried hundreds of films during my travels, which have extended to many lands and included a variety of climates. These films have been exposed under the most trying circumstances, and the loss by defective films has not exceeded from 2 to 2 1/2 per cent. There are many advantages in using the kodak roll film, one of the greatest being in the changing of the roll, which can be accomplished in broad daylight, without the use of the dark-room. Exposures can also be made in quicker succession by the kodak roll camera than by those provided with plate-holders.

The chief difficulty here is in estimating by the eye the correct distance in feet, between the object to be photographed and the operator, and setting the pointer at the proper scale. A miscalculation would throw the picture out of the focus and produce a blur; practice, however, enables one to overcome this.

To counteract the experience on the part of the beginner, one company has manufactured a folding camera, called the "No. 1 Folding Pocket Kodak," which takes a picture measuring 2 1/4 x 3 1/8 inches—also called a "No. 1 Folding Pocket Kodak," giving a negative 2 1/4 x 3 1/8 inches. These two cameras are of universal focus, hence require no adjustment on the part of the operator. From my own experience I would recommend the tourist to include one of these in his outfit, as they are ready for instantaneous or time exposures. They are rarely out of order, and their photographic qualities are most satisfactory.

While on a recent journey I met an enthusiastic amateur, whose only camera was a "No. 3 Folding Pocket Kodak." These cameras require proper focus to be made on each subject up to 100 feet; but regardless of this fact, or of the use of the finder, he shut off his shutter at random—to the right—to the left—before—behind—at any and everything that came his way, and when snapping the shutter he would close his eyes, pointing his camera in the direction of the subject, like an amateur from some foreign land. The results! Then he innocently and contentedly the innocent little kodak. The tourist should have his films, rolls, or glass plates hermetically sealed in tin boxes, and after exposure they should be returned to the sealed tin boxes. This is a safeguard against dampness and variable climates of other countries, and also protects them from the attacks of the proverbial and ill-disposed "baggage-smasher."

While traveling in the interior of Japan,



NO. I.



NO. II.



NO. III.

I lost fully 250 plates which had been carefully exposed, by not observing this simple precaution.

I would advise the traveler to become thoroughly acquainted with his camera before starting on his journey. I have the regret of the disappointing experience of a celebrated explorer, who took, as he supposed, more than 500 pictures (photographs) that any one would desire to possess. What's the use of all the trouble, expense and labor of owning and operating a camera? At the best, you never succeed in having more than 40 per cent of your photographic work turn out well.

How could any one live in this age of progress, love of beauty and refinement with such a narrow mind, especially a traveler? I was anxious to see his collection, so shortly made him a visit and viewed his photographs—and what did I find? The same old stereotyped, over-handled, threadbare pictures that every traveler has almost forced upon him. Look at the photographs of this tourist and compare them with those of one's own taking. Is there any comparison as regards interest and happy memories between the two? The purchased photograph is cold in tone and feeling, without incident or association.

By all means, own your own camera; learn how to operate it, and have the ready wit to make your tour not only a success to yourself, but also a pleasure to your friends upon your return home.

I—Placing a Picture.

The beginner frequently makes the mistake of placing his camera so close to the person or object to be photographed, that his subject will more than fill the plate, and the result is sometimes a grotesque appearance—the head or a portion of the body of the sitter being cut off, or perhaps the best part of a fine landscape being lost. Eight times out of ten the operator, upon beholding the consequences of his error, will condemn the camera as a poor one, or his lens as defective.

This fault is easily avoided. Place your camera at such a distance from your subject that the figures will be correctly proportioned on the plate. Uncap the lens, cover the camera with a black cloth, and proceed to focus sharply, using a magnifying glass upon the ground glass.

Should the image reflected upon the glass be too large, move the camera back; if too small, advance it. The result is as shown in plate No. 1. This is caused by the subject's moving

while the exposure was being made. To avoid this difficulty, procure a head rest for your camera; this can be adjusted to suit all the various positions in which you may desire to place your subject, as it can be used for either full figure work or sitting positions.

Should your lens be a quick one, so as to enable you to take instantaneous exposures in the studio, then of course it would be unnecessary to use the head rest; otherwise, if the time for the exposure is from four to ten seconds, you will be more sure of good results if you use the rest.

I grant that it would be better not to use the rest if the subject could hold perfectly still, as in the latter case the position is more natural and graceful than where a rest is used; but you will find it a very difficult matter to get the sitter to remain absolutely still during the required time for exposure.

III—Posing Single Figures or Groups.

There are many points to be considered in photographing figures and groups. First notice the arrangement, if you would have an artistic picture. Avoid stiffness and straight lines in posing your subject. Natural curves give grace and beauty.

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The reason for this is apparent. The figures—A—B—C—are at equal distances from the lens, and when focus is made on the central figure B, both A and C are also in proportion.

Avoid placing perpendicular objects, such as lamps, tables, etc., (as in plate No. 3), in close proximity to the person who is to be photographed. These articles give a stiff character to the picture, and if they are of small size, the whole scene looks ill proportioned.

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These diaphragms or stops are to the lens what the keyboard is to the piano; to do good work one must study carefully their uses. I have met scores of amateurs, who own and operate cameras, who have never used these stops at all. They may have noticed that these were attached to their lenses, but overlooked their use or considered them unimportant. Every lens, whether of cheap or expensive manufacture, is provided with what are termed diaphragms or stops, the use of which is to increase or diminish the amount of light entering the camera in order to secure a sharper image upon the ground glass and consequently upon the negative. For instance: If the day is bright and sunny and you wish to take a time exposure, you may with advantage stop your lens down to No. 22 or 24 diaphragm; but should the day be dark and cloudy, you can increase the light on your negative by using stop No. 4 or No. 5. Do not forget that the higher the number of the stop or diaphragm, the more time you must allow for the exposure; hence, if you allow an exposure of one-fifth of one second with No. 16 stop, one-fifth of one second must be given with the No. 22 stop, one-third of one second with the No. 32 stop, and so on. The more closely you "stop down" the lens, the sharper will be the details in your picture.

When the sitter is placed to your satisfaction, take your camera and focus sharply the image upon the ground glass. Focus upon the eye of the person, which will equalize the general effect. In taking a group, focus upon the central figure. In arranging a group, place the figures in a curved line, thus:

The reason for this is apparent. The figures—A—B—C—are at equal distances from the lens, and when focus is made on the central figure B, both A and C are also in proportion.

Avoid placing perpendicular objects, such as