

Oct. 10, 1939.

Mr. Frank L. Harvey,
Easton, Penna.

Dear Mr. Harvey:-

Here is the article. I was glad indeed to receive your letter for I have long felt that there has been such an over emphasis on equipment. If you wish any additional data regarding my personal equipment I can send it along also with the prints which will be off to you about Friday. I must say some glossies that I feel sufficiently satisfied with. I am please to tell you that Mr. Steichen has accepted two prints of mine for the U.S. Camera Annual, a landscape and a portrait.

If there are any changes you wish me to make in the article or additions or subtractions I hope that there will be time enough to do it. I am sending you six prints from which you may make your selection.

hoping that I have covered ground that will appeal to you and that I am not repeating what some one else may have already sent in, I am

Sincerely yours,

MY FAVORITE CAMERA AND LENS AND WHY.

In these days of miniature cameras by the thousands, it gives me pleasure to say quickly in answer to this question- an 8x10 view camera. Why? I want to see what I am doing, for one thing, I get better results for most kinds of work for another. This of-course only starts the arguments of this camera vs that camera. Excellent arguments can be produced by both sides, but what of it? It is the results that I am interested in, not the means. It is true that the miniature camera has some advantages over a large camera, and there are some things that it can do that no other camera can do. Therefore for those things use it, but why try to make it do what a large camera can do better and more easily?

When all is said and done it is not the camera, it is not the lens, but how you have learned to use that camera and lens that matters. There is so much confusion to-day with such an enormous variety of camera, lenses, equipment of one kind and another, that the beginner must have a hard time indeed to make a choice. My thoughts on the subject are- Keep your equipment as simple as possible- choose the camera and lens best suited to the type of work you wish to do, then work hard to master the use of that instrument so that it becomes a willing tool in your hands. The general public still seems to think that it is the instrument that has made the picture, not the person who is using that instrument. One simply does not go up to a musician after an inspiring concert and congratulate him upon his instrument! As a matter of fact one seldom even thinks of the instrument itself but what that musician has made his instrument do. Nor does one ask a painter what kind of brushes he uses; nor a sculptor what kind of chisels. What difference does it make what kind of tools he uses? What difference does it make what kind of a camera Mr. Steichen uses? No one else would ever achieve the same result with a duplicate his camera. It isn't the camera but what you have learned to see and to feel and learned to put on to paper through the use of that camera that is the only thing that counts.

The obstacles and difficulties of photography are many. It seems to me that one of the greatest obstacles is the fact that a negative can be made so easily. Consequently the majority of photographers make hundreds of negatives that are no more than wasted material, for the simple reason that not enough careful thought went into the making of those negatives. The musician expresses himself with waves of sound- the photographer with waves of light. In learning how to bend those waves of light to suit your thoughts and feelings is the first step to creating a work of art by photography. Great photographs are not made by going about snapping countless negatives with this camera or that camera and hoping that out of those many negatives some part (occasionally the whole) of one negative will render a masterpiece! Great photographs are made by exposing very few negatives usually, sometimes only one, but before that negatives is made much thought, much observation, much feeling for the subtle differences of light and absence of light have made the photographer who is making that

that negative see and feel what he wishes to obtain through that negative. Photography is, I believe, the most sensitive of all mediums of expression. The least change in expression in a human face can be instantly recorded. The great difficulty lies in obtaining simultaneously all the many component parts that are necessary to create a work of art. The value of careful study on a large ground glass is of the utmost importance. It is only through consistent effort of such study that the eye can acquire a sense of fine design and see the necessity for subtle and delicate adjustments, just as the musicians fingers acquire the same ability in the creation of sound. How can one acquire this ability by squinting through a tiny one eyed finder? True, that after having used a large camera the training it has given will make the difficulty of composing etc, not quite so difficult in the small finder. It is well to pause and consider the efforts of one of our early landscape photographers, William H. Jackson who climbed many of the fourteen thousand foot Colorado mountains taking his equipment which consisted of a wet plate outfit size twenty by twenty four inches. He only made one negative and he saw to it that that one negative was right! Modern equipment both in instruments and materials have progressed far ahead of our ability to use them. It is up to us to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

In addition to keeping ones equipment simple and pliable, it seems to me also wise to simplify all subsequent processes. The use of one emulsion until all its capabilities are known and mastered. The same in the use of printing processes. Here again there is such a great choice of material that one must concentrate on the mastery of one at a time. With all the fast moving impetus that photography has to-day it seems to me necessary to pause- to consider modern directions and tendencies, and out of the thousands of photographs which are both exhibited and reproduced, to determine how many of them are leading us in the upward direction of a true and great expression of life as seen and felt by artists using a camera as an instrument.

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