Amateur photographer and cinematographer 1930

January

P15 Facts and Formulae

Amongst other things = A deodoriser

Those who tone their bromide prints with sodium sulphide are painfully familiar with the powerful smell of sulphuretted hydrogen which it emits. If the diluted solution is poured down the sink after use the smell persists for along time. A solution of potassium permanganate say one in sixteen should be kept handy and a little added to the used sulphide solution before pouring it away.

January 15th p14/49

Weights and measures…

“ It is possible for most beginners, as I have said, to improvise a serviceable dark-room. It is also easy to make a small collection of “chemicals” and to obtain the few accessories necessary t o make use of them. For ordinary work – developing printing toning enlarging slide making and so on - it is surprising how few materials are required. And they very little cost in proportion to the work they do. … all made on pieces of paper coated only with gelatine, which I sensitised myself by brushing on a solution of potassium bichromate … This is only one of a dozen more uses to which potassium bichromate can be put in photography. Its cost is trifling but it ones of the handiest of salts to have at hand f. I use if for oil printing, bromoil, carbon intensifying, toning, cleaning dishes and several other things beside. // It is much the same with several other salts and acids. The have manifold uses. // but to take advantage of this it is necessary to be able to weigh and measure so as to make up the different formulae. And what are the requirements? Practically nothing more than a small pair of scales, with weights, two or three glass graduates and a glass or vulcanite stirring rod. You could buy the lot new for a ten shilling note and still have enough change to buy sufficient potassium bichromate to last for years. And you would very soon save all the money and much more besides being able to do things that have thitherto been beyond you. … where an ounce is mentioned in a formula it refers to the ounce as bought, the avoir dupois ounce. This or the half ounce can be weighed out when necessary with household scales. (Make a point of cleaning out the scale pan , as some photographic chemicals do not improve pastry.)

Some chemicals are not weighed out in the quantities required but are added by means of a stock solution of known strength. Such solutions can easily be prepared if weights and measures are available. …..

January 22nd P6/63

Facts and Formluae –

Ammonium sulphide –for sulphide toning the ammonium salt is preferable to the sodium. The smell is, if anything, worse, but the solution keeps better and is not liable to the deterioration which causes sodium sulphide to produce weak prints with yellow brown tones. Eight or ten minims of the ammonium sulphide solution to the ounce of water is a satisfactory strength.

Flashpowder – if carefully used flashpower is a perfectly safe form of illuminant, but a word of warning may be given with regard to the mixing of the powders. These are sent out by the makers packed separately. The magnesium is in one tube and in another a second powder, generally potassium chlorate, which assists the combustion. These two powders must be perfectly mixed or the powder may scatter while burning. Mixing should take place just before use, as there is a tendency in a short time for the potassium chlorate to solidify in the form of small lumps. These not only make ignition more difficult bit they may fly into the air while burning with the risk of fire or at least damage to furniture. If after a period of storage the mixed powder is found to be lumpy, these lumps should be taken out or reduced to powder attain by gentle rubbing through the dry fingers.

What is Tripoli powder? - powdered stone, used in woodwork, is an abrasive

(included in cleaning glass: water, meths, lquid ammonia Tripoli powder)

Jan 29th p15/90 – compile a list of the chemicals necessary for a first venture – enabling one to lay in a stock for developing toning etc along with approx quantities. I do not advise any beginner to cumber his shelves with rows of bottles some of which he will seldom or never open. Let our slogan in this matter be economy, efficiency and convenience.

February 5th With the Beginners –

Some useful chemicals

According to the promise I proceed to give some information about a few of the chemicals – as we shall call them – most likely to be of service to the beginner in photography. [why the as we shall call them? ]

Years ago the catalogue of any large photographic firm contained a long and complete list of these chemicals but now they have almost disappeared. To some extent their place is taken by proprietary articles put up in bottles packets or compressed form and generally requiring nothing by water to make them ready for use. Some of these preparations are extremely convenient and in many cases it is better to buy a commercial article rather than attempt to prepare it, but my case is that there are many formulae which can be made up quite easily by the bringer . some of them are all the better for being quite fresh. …..

Although some of the articles I mention below are so generally listed as they once were they are easily obtained from photographic dealers, and most of them are included in the ordinary stock of chemist. The prices quoted must only be taken as given and idea of the cost, which varies from time to time and according to the source of supply. In any case, it is unwise to be tempted by a low price into buying an inferior article. The genuine thing is more reliable in use and the cheapest in the long run.

At the highest prices that can be paid there is considerable economy. For example with the pyro-soda developer …..

Sodium thiosulphate – this is the correct name of what is commonely called sodium hyposulphite or hypo, generally in the form of pea crystals packed in cartons and … it can also be obtaine in larger grystal or in the dry forma spowder. If the crysta are kept before use thye must be stored in a dry place . it is better to put the crla into solutiona tonce. [describes basic chemicals as I’ve already listed elsewhere. No further info on suppliers. Some info given on use eg sealing corks with paraffin if not likely to be used, pour bottles on the side away from the lable, smear glass stoppers with Vaseline, dry cupboard better than open shelves, label every bottle, celluloid varnish over labels.]

February 26th p11/175

Indoor portraiture with magnesium ribbon.

…. Amateur flashlight portraiture is frequently marred by the model registering an expression of extreme suspense while waiting for the flash to go off. The following method, which is ridiculously simple and may be used by anyone with a great deal of certainty can be recommended as an alternative. All that is required when a portrait is wanted is to burn three or four inches of mg ribbon after having made the necessary preps in regard to the camera plates an sitter.

Use very fast panchromic plates. Enables short exposures. Specially sensitive to the type of light ray given by the mg ribbon … three or four inches should be ample in an ordinary small room and even the time of burning can be halved if the ribbon is doubled and hangs in a small loop of about two inches, although one usually finds even on lighting the single strip that it flares up and is out in well under the second, an no body should move in this short space of time. // a pair of old pliers or scissors are handy in which to hold the ribbon and it is advisable to place a piece of metal underneath the place it is to be burnt so as to catch the ash. No trouble at all should be met with even the smoke as even six exposures can be made following one another without the atmosphere becoming dense. …

March 19th p 7/ 235

The question of permanence – permanence of negatives and prints ….

Various method of packing and storing negatives have been advocated .. although not requiring quite the same attention as unexposed plates they still need a considerable amount of care, particularly if valuable. If one of the commercial negative filing boxes is employed each negative can be kept in a separate envelope supplied for the purpose and placed in the box in the manner usually adopted in filing cabinets. Chemically pure paper - failing this the best plan it obtain a supply of chemically pure paper cut in pieces the same size as the negatives, and store the latter in the original plate boxes film to film, with a piece of the paper separating them. The boxes needless to say should be stored in a dry place. It must be remembered that if chemically pure paper is unobtainable, the negatives are best stored film to film with nothing whatever between. Ordinary paper or pieces of newspaper which are sometimes used should be avoided. The first may contain traces of hypo and the printing matter on the latter will in the course of time impress itself onto the gelatine film if pressed in contact with it and be extremely difficult to remove.

April 2nd p34/298

Photography in south Africa

…. Dark rooms at ones own home are a luxury and possessed by few. The majority of keen and enthusiastic amateur photographer are as a rule found only where there is photographic society in their town or city. [nothing remarked on about the availability of supplies – though in the adverts therear eusually African / empire suppliers listed]

April 9th p13/309

Gadgets – Clean fingers – to the photographer, clean fingers mean more than to the ordinary person. Fingers which appear spotless maybe chemically dirty. All who deal with prints will remember with horror that print which when finished looked like some criminal record card; every delicate line of ones fingers faithfully recorded and we though our fingers were clean. When making up solutions and handling numerous bottles, especially when uncorking those bottles chemical material is transferred to the hands and what was useful in one place is annoying in another.

Cut a shallow slit in the cork across the grain press a piece of household tape into it. Ties the ends leaving sufficient for a loop by which the cork is to be withdrawn.

P29 /325

Acetylene – a warning [details need to clean out laps as there is a danger of explosion especially when brass is involved – use steel or rubber tubing. If carbide is ever difficult to obtain your chemist will supply you with any of the alkaline carbides and these will act very well. … another way to make it is by passing alcohol, ether or methane through a red hot tube. Still another way is to mix either chloroform, bromoform or iodoform with zinc dust.

April 23rd p 22/366

The methods of procuring acetylene are of academic interest only, prove extremely dangerous in the hands of other than a trained chemist. In error of stating chemist can supply any of the alkaline carbines. Made by Bethelot, Moissan and Matignon w… an explosion may occur on adding water to an excess of sodium carbide. Carbides of the alkali metals cannot be obtained commercially. (Letter from Edwin E Jelley)

April 30th – p9/395 extraordinary general meeting unanimous deciousn to admit lady members to the Camera Club, John St Adelphi :London. Growing number of women photogarphers exclusion coud no longer be continued. Clug wise move. Ladies who area wives or daughters of memers will pay a reduced sub.

May 21st another article on potassium bichromate and it s many uses.

Seems to be a good mixture of chemical topics and hardware, as well as composition tips. Lots of making own basic equipment, where can I obtain is usually answered by “any photographic dealer can supply it”. Most contributors seem to be male, but there are mentions of Miss and Mrs (one did a feature on photographing cats), as well as some people going only by initials or even psuedonyms, so cannot tell.