

HOW TO HOLD A CAMERA

By L. W. BROWNELL

ONE of the first things that a beginner should learn is how to properly hold the camera, for by far the greater proportion of failures, of which he will turn out a good many, will arise from the fact that the camera was held in a wrong position, during the exposure, and this is because nearly every beginner is apt to think that the camera was held in a wrong position pointed at any angle so long as the image of the subject he wishes to photograph appears upon the finder.

In the first place the camera should be held absolutely level when there are any vertical lines appearing in the picture. We are all familiar with those grotesque photographs turned out by every young amateur in which the buildings are falling over either on their faces or backs, to the imminent danger of all passers. This is the result of tilting the camera either upward or downward, for where a vertical line is shown the least tilt of the camera will cause that line to deviate from the perpendicular to a greater or less extent according to the angle at which the camera is tilted. Therefore, the most natural position is to hold the camera well up with the back pressed against the breast, so that when the head is bent the eyes will be directly above the finder. In this position it is simplicity itself to tell when your view is correctly registered and when your vertical lines are parallel; moreover, by holding the camera as high on the chest as possible it is nearer to the point of view of a person's eye, and the resulting picture will be accordingly more satisfactory. Then, too, by pressing it tightly against the chest there is less danger of vibration, and I have even been able, in that way, to make an exposure of one or two seconds without showing movement in the print. Ordinarily a camera should never be held in the hands for an exposure of more than a fifth of a second, for in a longer exposure than this the slightest movement of the camera will show double lines, and this is, of course, ruinous to the picture. Where exposures of more than one-fifth of a second are necessary it is always easy to find some kind of a support if it is nothing more than a rock, a fence post, or even, as a last resort, a stake driven into the ground will do.

One must not think because I have said not to tilt the camera when photographing anything in which vertical lines appear that it can never be tilted with good results. There are many subjects that will not only allow of doing this, but that make it absolutely imperative; such as high-jumping, cloud-scapes, trees, waterfalls and a large number of similar subjects, and at these the camera may be tilted upward with im-

punity and with no fear of showing distortion.

On the other hand, also, there are many subjects that can be photographed by pointing the camera downward at them, such as children at play, dogs and cats, people bathing, etc. Horizontal lines make no difference, but if one will always bear in mind that where there are parallel perpendicular lines the camera *must* be held absolutely level, and where there are none it does not matter, their pictures will be wonderfully improved.

Have you ever tried to take photographs of a parade or anything else where it was impossible to find an elevated position above the heads of the crowd that intervened between you and your subject? This can be done with ease by holding the camera upside down at arm's length above your head and looking upward into the finder. It is not so awkward a position as it may seem, and it makes no difference in the resulting negative whether the camera is held upside down or right side up. It is always well to bear in mind when taking photographs of a passing parade that the results are never so pleasing when taken absolutely at right angles.

There is one more position in which a camera may be held that is often very useful, and that is pointing it backward by holding it under the arm in such a position that the view-finder may be looked into with ease. There are many times, as we all know, when the fact that our subject is aware of our intention to photograph him will spoil the natural pose in which we wished to obtain him, and this can generally be obviated by standing with our back to him and holding our camera in the position described, when he need never even know that he has been "taken."

It sometimes happens that a fall or other accident may break or so injure the view-finder that it will be useless, but that need not deter you from finishing your day's photographing. By holding the camera on a level with and close to the eyes that part of the scene which is included between the two forward corners of your camera as you look over the top of it will be practically what the lens would show, and that point of the view which appears directly midway between the two corners will be the center of the scene as it will appear in the negative. You must be sure, however, to look directly along the top of your camera.

One more small piece of advice: When taking head-on pictures of anything such as a horse and carriage, a boat or anything in which a perspective is necessary do not try to be close to your subject, for if you do the perspective will be entirely destroyed and terrible distortion result.