

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

VOL. V. No. 124.—January 18, 1861.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION.

THE annual Exhibition in connection with the Photographic Society is naturally regarded as the epitomized and embodied record of the year's photographic progress; of its scientific discoveries, its practical improvements, and its advance in art-culture. What men of science or practice have proposed, what societies have discussed, and what journals have suggested, recorded, examined, and criticised, we here hope to find in practical results, and, in a very literal sense, "teaching by example."

The eighth annual Exhibition, which was opened for a private view on Saturday the 12th, and to the public on Monday, at the Gallery of Water Colours in Pall Mall, whilst it meets this view very fully in some respects, is scarcely a satisfactory exponent of the year's progress as a whole. Our first impression, after a general inspection on Saturday, was one of almost unalloyed pleasure. We were so agreeably surprised at the general excellence of the exhibited pictures, after a season in every way so unfavourable for the production of good results; we were so well pleased with the *material* qualities—excellent processes, excellent manipulation, excellent lenses—the existence of which so many of the pictures proved; and above all we were so delighted with decided art-progress so abundantly manifested, that we willingly echoed the general remark, "What an excellent exhibition!" It is only on a second and more reflective examination, that the absence is felt of much that is necessary to a complete embodiment of the year's results. There is absolutely scarcely one important novelty exhibited; nor are there specimens of progress of many important branches of the art. There is no specimen of photo-lithography or photo-zincography, although two or three distinct processes have been brought to a very high state of perfection during the year. There is no specimen of carbon printing. There is no specimen of M. Joubert's process of photographic enamelling. There is no specimen of Mr. Sutton's panoramic photography. There is scarcely a specimen to mention of celestial photography notwithstanding the amount of interest attaching to it, in connection with the eclipse of last July. There is scarcely any example—none specified—of the productions of the solar camera. The only novelty of importance is the process of block-printing by Herr Pretsch, of which some promising prints, and the blocks from which they are produced, are exhibited. There are also some specimens exhibited by M. Claudet of photographic portraits in "enamel colours, burnt in by the process of M. Lafon de Carmassac." What part photography plays in the production of these we are not informed; they are exquisite enamel paintings, but by no means examples of photographic veracity, if the portrait of Her Majesty the Queen be regarded as a fair specimen. With the two exceptions we have quoted, there is no novelty whatever; no evidence of the extension of the powers or applications of photography to fresh branches of science, art, or commerce; the whole of the six hundred and twenty-two frames exhibited containing specimens—for the most part very good specimens—of the ordinary and well known processes of photography.

The result of an analysis of these six hundred and twenty-

two specimens is somewhat singular. Of the total number not less than five hundred and fifty-two are by the wet collodion process; twenty-eight by the collodio-albumen process, of these twenty-eight, seventeen are by Mr. Mudd; twenty by the metagelatine process, eighteen of these being by Mr. Maxwell Lyte; eight by the Fothergill process; nine by the waxed paper process, of which eight are by the Rev. T. M. Raven; two are by the malt process; two by the honey process; and one by the oxymel process. Whilst the wet process claims such a pre-eminence in the number of its representatives, we can by no means accord to it the same position as to excellence; the number of specimens being borne in mind, dry collodion takes much the foremost rank. It is a somewhat invidious task to award the palm of highest merit where there are a dozen of unexceptionable artists; but deciding by the specimens now exhibited, we should give decided priority to the works of Maxwell Lyte, James Mudd, and Francis Bedford; or to Mudd, Bedford, and Lyte; or to Bedford, Lyte, and Mudd, for the three are equal. The specimens of these gentlemen represent three distinct processes, the wet collodion worked by Mr. Bedford, the collodio-albumen process worked by Mr. Mudd, and the metagelatine process worked by Mr. Lyte. Nothing could be a more satisfactory verification of the idea so frequently enunciated in these pages, that it is not so much in processes, as in the cultivation of artistic taste and manipulatory skill that excellence depends. The pictures of each of these processes, abound in everything, constituting good pictures; the most perfect photography guided by thoroughly artistic feeling. We might mention a host of others whose productions are scarcely inferior: Fenton, Robinson, Bisson Freres, Wilson, Wardley, Bourne, Cundall and Downes, Heath, Campbell, Dovizielli, Fry, Gillis, Piper, and others.

The general impression the Exhibition conveys is, that it is a very full one; and although containing so many pictures of equal merit, that it is on the whole as very well hung as the limited size of the room will permit. Those pictures possessing manifest pre-eminence in merit have generally the best positions, and we have not noticed, hitherto, any picture especially deserving examination that is hung beyond the reach of such scrutiny.

Amongst the most noticeable pictures, especially as to size, are some immense pictures by P. Dovizielli; one of the Coliseum at Rome, (30,) is especially fine, and a very perfect vigorous photograph: it possesses, alas!—for we must always express our feeling on this subject—a white-paper sky. St. Peter's, Rome, (52,) is a similar picture with scarcely as much merit.

One of the next features that strikes us is the increase in the number of reproductions, especially from paintings. We must confess to a considerable pleasure in this fact, as we regard this as capable of becoming a still more important branch of photography, and think it worthy of every effort to overcome the varying photogenic action of colour, so as to secure perfect results in this direction. Where this can be done, reproductions, giving the exact touch and drawing of the master, must, as we have before observed, possess a value and an interest impossible to attain by any other means. Amongst those excelling in this department, Messrs. Cundall and Downes occupy a foremost place in this Exhibition, followed by Ponting, J. Hogarth, jun., Dovizielli, Caldesi, Hering, and others.

In the centre of the wall at the top of the room—by common consent regarded as the place of honour—is hung Mr. Robinson's "Holiday in the Woods." We congratulate