

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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THE EXHIBITION OF ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION.

THE Exhibition of the Architectural Photographic Association is this year incomparably the best yet held under its auspices, and is decidedly better in relation to its scope, than that in connection with the Photographic Society, regarded as an exhibition of the general powers of the art. Many of the pictures here exhibited leave absolutely nothing to desire in connection with the perfect rendering of architectural subjects. How far it is true that the depicting of architectural subjects is the most legitimate *metier* of the photographer, as some hold, we will not say; but this, we think, will, by most persons competent to judge, be readily admitted, that higher perfection has been attained in this branch of photography than in any other.

Taking incomparably the first rank here, we think, are the productions of Francis Bedford. And, before proceeding further, we must enter our indignant protest against an opinion we have heard more than once expressed, and which we find declared in a very matter-of-course way in one of the morning papers, namely, that the productions of English photographers are vastly inferior to those of their continental compeers, the French and Italian photographers, and that the works of Bisson show "signs of greater judgment and artistic feeling than can be perceived in the works of our best men." We most emphatically demur to this opinion: recognising heartily all the merits of the continental artists; especially admiring the magnificent photographs sent by Bisson to this Exhibition, which certainly possess the perfection of literal or mechanical photography; we nevertheless unhesitatingly express our conviction that in all points, except size, they are equalled by the pictures of many English photographers, and that in the exhibition of artistic feeling, they are entirely surpassed by the pictures of Francis Bedford.

Architectural pictures may appear, and to a certain extent are, difficult subjects in which to display much artistic feeling. The most perfect literal transcript of the building, with every detail made out, presenting indeed in all respects photographic perfection, would appear necessarily to constitute the best architectural picture; and this may to a certain extent be true. But there is in many of Bedford's photographs here exhibited, such a display of fine taste and feeling in the selection of view, and still more especially in the choice of light and circumstances, as give to his productions a high pictorial value as works of art, entirely beyond their merit as architectural studies. Amongst the pictures of Bristol Cathedral, No. 229, "Entrance to the Chapter House;" No. 231, "The North Aisle;" and No. 228, "The Archway to College Green," are especially worthy of attention. Amongst the views of Wells Cathedral are some especial gems, amongst which No. 251, "The West Front;" Nos. 253 and 254, "The North Porch;" No. 256, "The South Aisle," and some others in the same series will excite admiration. Some of the most exquisite things, exhibited by Mr. Bedford, are the photographs from the interior of St. Paul's of the fine carvings of Grinlin Gibbons: these will well repay the most careful examination. Some views of the Cathedral at Canterbury, and the Rivaulx Abbey, are also very fine.

Perhaps the largest exhibitor, in every sense of the word, both as to number and dimensions of his productions, is M. Bisson, who contributes not less than sixty-five speci-

mens, the majority of which are of very large size, and, as we have before said, of undoubted excellence. "The Entrance to the Imperial Library of the Louvre," No. 5, is a magnificent specimen of photography, as are the various views of Rheims and Rouen Cathedrals. Notwithstanding the large size of many of these, which are not less, we imagine, than twenty-four inches square, they are free from distortion, and exhibit perfect definition to the corners of the plates. Taken in full sunlight, they are brilliant and vigorous, whilst there is not the smallest patch of light without detail, nor of black shadow without drawing. The shadows indeed are exquisitely transparent, the eye being carried by tender gradations into their deepest gloom. There is moreover a relief and a vigour combined with the utmost microscopic delicacy of detail, rarely met with, which give to these specimens of the best period of Gothic architecture—we are especially referring to the Rouen pictures—an especial value to the connoisseur. Almost all Bisson's pictures present very excellent photography, but there are some in which the distortion produced by the lens, or the misuse of it, is very offensive. No. 53, "The Great Clock, S. Ouen Cathedral," is a glaring example of what, using a solecism, has been called, "converging perpendiculars." We are somewhat surprised to find that Bisson, whose very large pictures are so perfect in every respect, should exhibit a number of moderate-sized ones so strikingly faulty.

M. Legrey exhibits a few fine and large specimens of Notre Dame, which will receive much attention. No. 79 is a very noticeable picture, not only as an excellent photograph, but from the extraordinarily grotesque character of its subject, which forms part of a carving of the last judgment, in the old Parisian Cathedral.

Messrs. Cundall and Downes have a goodly show of specimens here, many of which are exceedingly happy. The series of Winchester Cathedral please us best, and present some magnificent photography. Mr. Dallmeyer's triplet lens has rendered a good account of itself here, giving absolute freedom from distortion under the most trying circumstances. We must not omit to notice an exquisite little vignette, No. 103, "A View of St. Paul's from the River." The usual explanation is given for vignetting this picture, that the outside was imperfect. We would very much rather believe it was the result of deliberate intention, for it is a case where the sacrifice of part of the negative has produced a real picture, which the full introduction of details might have marred.

Mr. Fenton exhibits a large number of specimens, many of which are very fine, although there is more or less a tendency to the fault of which we have before spoken. "The North Porch, Southwell Abbey," No. 221, is an excellent picture, as is also 224, "Harewood House, from the Parterre."

We have not space here to notice the exquisite Egyptian photographs of Frith, nor the pictures of Moens, Captain Austen, Church, Mudd, Dolamore and Bullock, and others; but must return to them on another occasion.

An interesting feature in connection with this Exhibition is the delivery of lectures, every Tuesday evening, on subjects connected with the various photographs exhibited. The first lecture, delivered last Tuesday evening, was on the Egyptian photographs, by Joseph Bonomi, Esq., who with much lucidity traced the dim antiquity and consequent interest of the subjects of many of the pictures, and the great historic value of the photographs as authentic records of these relics of architecture, which extend back almost into the night of time.