

# THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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## CABINET PORTRAITS.

The suggestion for a new popular style, or rather size, of portraiture, first introduced to photographers in our columns, has now been before the public for upwards of six months, and although it has received a fair share of acceptance with professional portraitists in this country, we do not think that cabinet portraits have become as popular, nor circulated as generally, as they ought to have done. In many provincial towns they have obtained an established position, and have come into general demand; but in the metropolis, where the example naturally should be set, and the fashion established, we have reason to believe that comparatively few have been produced.

The reasons for this are doubtless various, and some of them we have learnt from personal conversation with many of the first portraitists. One reason, we have heard alleged, is this: "At present," it is said, "our demand for cards is sufficiently good to make us unwilling to disturb it by the introduction of any novelty." Another has answered: "It would interfere with my whole-plate portraits, for which I have a good demand, and for which I obtain a much higher price than I could hope to obtain for cabinet portraits." A third adds: "I do not care much about the style myself, and I do not think that photographic portraiture can be stimulated by pushing any style." A fourth has simply shrugged his shoulders and said: "I do not think it will take." These and similar answers have been given by portraitists of good position, whose influence would, if exercised, be sufficient to create a fashion. A number of others, of less position, who would willingly create the demand if they could, give as their experience that "the public will not pay for anything more expensive than the cards;" and add their conviction "that photography has seen its best days." Our own conviction is, that the reason the new size has not yet become so popular as it ought to be is simply the want of unanimity of action in giving it an impulse. As we stated when we first recommended the project to the public, success in such a matter must depend on the hearty, unanimous effort of photographers themselves.

This is essentially a portraitist's question. Indirectly its success will promote the interests of all connected with photography; but its chief importance is to professional portraitists, by many of whom the late depression in trade generally, and in their own art particularly, has been severely felt. It rests with them still to give the necessary impulse to this, or the introduction of any novelty which may revive the waning demand for portraits consequent upon the satiety produced by the card mania. After a dissipation or excess comes a surfeit. The public indulged for a few years in a perfect revel of card portraiture, and in many cases satiety has ensued. After a surfeit the appetite must be excited by gentle stimulants in the shape of novelties, and

these it is the office and interest of professional portraitists to administer.

The success of cabinet portraiture appears to have been much greater abroad. To afford facilities for the unanimous action we recommended about six months ago, we sent examples of the style to various American and Continental journalists and influential photographers, and communications commending the matter to their attention. We have heard good accounts from time to time of the success of the suggestion in Germany; but it is in America, that the most complete success appears to have attended the movement. Mr. Notman, of Montreal, who had just introduced a new size, somewhat varying from the cabinet standard, notwithstanding that he had been to some considerable trouble and expense in making arrangements for his own size, at once, in order to avoid anything tending to destroy unanimity in spirit and uniformity in size, put aside his own project, and heartily adopted the cabinet size.

We have just received from him a packet of admirable examples of this style. We may notice at the outset that he has not commenced by trying it timidly, but made arrangements which imply that he means the experiment to be successful. We before intimated that he began by getting a stock of albums. The card case, open at each end for dispatch by post, in which these arrived, is neatly made, with an engraved wrapper, on one side of which "Cabinet Portraits" is boldly printed, together with name, address, &c., of the producer. Special mounts are prepared, with neatly-printed name, address, &c., on back and front. The pictures themselves are some of the most perfect examples of photography we have ever seen. The arrangement of backgrounds and accessories include both interior and open-air scenery, and all are exceedingly perfect. Amongst the latter are several of the effects which Mr. Notman has made entirely his own, and in which he is wonderfully successful. We refer to the production of snow scenes: snow-clad landscapes with wintry skies; figures muffled in fur, feet sinking into and partially covered with the snow; some wearing snow shoes, their clothes partially covered with snow. In some of them the snow is descending; in one, a group of two gentlemen, well wrapped up against the weather, each with the huge combination of light frame and net-work known as snow shoes on his feet, are making their way through a heavy snow storm, which beats pitilessly in their faces. In the effect of action in breasting and making headway against the storm, the perfect "go" of which is most effective. As photography, nothing could be finer than these pictures, whilst as examples of chiaroscuro and composition they are most excellent.

Our excellent contemporary, the *Philadelphia Photographer*, one admirable feature of which is the publication monthly of some example of photography, issued in the January number a fine example of Mr. Notman's cabinet