

# THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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### A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION IN LONDON.

The photographic exhibition projected by the Council of the Photographic Society for the opening meeting of the next session may be, and, we think, ought to be, something more than a mere display of the recent productions of the resident members of the Society. For some years past the public photographic exhibitions held in London have been, commercially speaking, failures. The cost of a suitable hall in a central position, and of attendance, advertising, printing, &c., is necessarily somewhat heavy, and the income has been nearly *nil*. The curiosity which years ago induced many visitors to pay an entrance fee in order to examine the marvellous beauty of a new art, and mark from year to year its singular progress, has subsided. With familiarity wonder has ceased, and if the interest in the art's productions has not in some degree ceased, it has found fresh means of gratification in examining the examples found in the portfolios of almost all lovers of art, and in the album to be found in almost every home. Hence public exhibitions of photographs have lost much of the charm to the general public, and the holding of exhibitions during recent years has made such serious incursion on the funds of the Photographic Society that it has been found expedient to abandon the enterprise in future.

Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that such exhibitions are of very great importance to the advancement of any art. They are at once landmarks of progress and incentives to increased excellence. Illustrations of new processes, new styles, and new applications, are brought together, and afford all interested in the scientific, artistic, and commercial aspects of the art-science, an opportunity of examining actual results, instead of taking opinions at second-hand. They are valuable to the professional photographer, who sees examples of new sizes and new styles. He can form an idea of the effect of plain and scenic backgrounds, of varied accessories, of modes of lighting, toning, and general treatment. It is true he may often see isolated examples of variety in this way without an exhibition; but nothing else presents him with such an excellent opportunity of comparative examination. The amateur finds in the exhibition collective illustrations of the various dry processes, the work of different lenses, &c. The manufacturer has an opportunity of exhibiting his most recent improvement. And every one has an opportunity of judging of the actual progress in the art, of seeing carbon prints, photo-relief prints, pantoscopic prints, photo-enamels, photo-engravings, photo-lithographs, and a score of other novelties, of which, otherwise, they can only read in journals, or gain a chance sight of exceptional specimens.

It is impossible, in fact, to over-estimate the interest and

advantage of a good photographic exhibition. Without the opportunities of comparison which such an occasion affords, little estimate of progress can be made, and a greater or less degree of unconscious stagnation often ensues. It is only after comparing the photographs in the International Exhibition that we become aware that English portraiture is scarcely equal to that of some of the nations of Continental Europe. It is true that international exhibitions cannot often be held; but what is true in principle of these is true of national exhibitions. It is only by a collective display that proper opportunity for comparison is afforded; and without comparison with others, no man can form a fair idea of his own relative excellence, and learn how much he has still to achieve.

We fear, however, that general exhibitions on the old system cannot again be held: the cost is too heavy, and there is no one to bear it. The exhibition proposed for November next cannot be as efficient as we should like; but it may be made a good substitute for something better. It has already developed from the first idea of the gentleman who proposed it, who simply contemplated a collection of the pictures of the season, to be shown at the first meeting of the session. It is now contemplated to devote the evening to the exhibition, and photographers generally, whether members or not, whether resident in London or elsewhere, are invited to contribute worthy examples of their work. Due publicity will doubtless be given to the arrangements in proper time.

Our object in referring to the matter specially some months before the time is to urge upon photographers some attention to the subject whilst there is time to prepare. We should be glad if very many would produce some of the best pictures in their power expressly for the occasion. We should be glad to find that many portraitists had been put on their mettle by the accounts of Parisian superiority, and stimulated to achieve equal excellence. There is no reason why this should not be done, and such an exhibition will afford an opportunity of showing that it has been done. We shall ask M. Salomon to contribute some of his best examples, and should he be disinclined we shall not be unwilling to exhibit those in our possession. A standard of comparison will thus be secured, which will give definiteness to the estimate which may be formed; and we shall be unwilling to believe that English photographers will remain behind any standard which is attainable.

On the score of landscapes, we have no higher standard to place before photographers than those produced by our own countrymen; but we may hope to see a larger number attaining the highest standard, and a greater prevalence of artistic excellence in addition to good photography; more appearance of design in the compositions in preference to accidental concurrence of aids to pictorial effect. Much interest might be added to the exhibition if a spirit of