

## PHOTOGRAPHY FOR PORTRAITS.

A DIALOGUE HELD IN AN ARTIST'S STUDIO.

## ANALYSIS.

[The object of this essay is to show that the *body* of photography is incompetent to maintain its existence in antagonism with the *soul* of Art: that no mechanical process can long supersede the living agency of man's mind: that there could have been no jealous anticipation of the discovery of photography in Sir Joshua Reynolds's hypothetical allusion to the "littleness and meanness" of "a view of nature represented with all the truth of the camera-obscura,"—photography not having been even dreamt of till more than half a century after his death; besides, that the camera reflects nature in all her rainbow hues, instead of the colourless stains which photography produces: that as well might the heart-strings of a Paganini's violin be emulated by the revolving cylinders of a patent music-box, or the ephemeral wax beauties in a barber's window vie with the sculptures of Michael Angelo, as photography's pretensions, in arbitrating for itself the noble rank of *equality* with the *arts*, be able to maintain it in possession of the usurpation which it now assumes; for it is nothing—and never can be anything—more than "a servant of servants:" and, lastly, that all the extraordinary expertness and parade of literal detail which delight the educated painter studies to conceal; "for," says Reynolds, "if the excellence of a painter consisted only in this kind of imitation, painting must lose its rank, and be no longer considered as a liberal art, and sister to poetry, this imitation being merely mechanical, in which the slowest intellect is always sure to succeed best, for the painter of genius cannot stoop to drudgery, in which the understanding has no part: and what pretence has the art to claim kindred with poetry, but its power over the imagination? To this power the painter of genius directs his aim; in this sense he studies nature, and often arrives at his end even by being unnatural, in the confined sense of the word. . . . To mingle the Dutch with the Italian school is to join contraries which cannot subsist together, and which destroy the efficacy of each other. The Italian attends only to the invariable, the great, and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature; the Dutch, on the contrary, to literal detail, as I may say of nature modified by accident. The attention to these petty peculiarities is the very cause of this naturalness so much admired in the Dutch pictures, which, if we suppose to be a beauty, is certainly of a lower order, that ought to give place to a beauty of a superior kind, since one cannot be obtained but by departing from the other."—R. C.]

## The Studio.

(A knock at the door.)

Artist. Come in.

Mr. Dogberry (in apparent haste). You take off portraits here?

A. I paint portraits.

D. You do them always from the photograph, of course?

A. No.

(Mr. Dogberry looks at the artist, and, with a nod of surprise, protests, "they cannot be very correct.")

A. My aim is not that they should be literally correct, but that they should be real.

D. How can they be real if they are not correct?

A. If they were correct according to your view of the case, they would not be real; that is, they would not be good portraits.

D. (with smiling self-complacence). I do not understand you, sir.

A. I know you do not; you must be taught a good deal before you do: it is a difficult subject, and, without meaning to disparage your insight, I think you have not studied it deeply.

D. I see nothing so very deep; I suppose anybody with an eye in his head can judge if a likeness be correct or not.

A. Your being unable to see its depth only implies that it is too much beneath you to admit of your being able to see it; truth lies in a well. It is certainly a popular aphorism, that anybody with common sense, and half an eye, can see a likeness in proportion to its merits. But even upon this very low view of the question, there are difficulties to be solved. People evidently do not see alike, or with the same eyes, otherwise our perceptions would coincide; whereas we find the opinions and criticisms upon any proposed subject greatly at variance. An eye for resemblance in portraiture, is equivalent to an ear for melody in music: as some ears are incapable of distinguishing one tune from another, so we find obtuseness of various degrees in the simplest subjects of common vision; the incapability of drawing a straight line, for example.

D. I don't think you could find such a case.

A. O yes, I have seen several instances; such as that of a good landscape painter, to whom the drawing of anything consisting of perpendicular walls

was an utter impossibility: and I have known highly-educated musicians, gifted with every capability for exquisite singing, except the certainty of always being in tune. There are also persons whose organs of vision seem well developed, except in the faculty of distinguishing colours.

D. I've heard of that; but I think any one could tell a likeness.

A. I think there are few who could fail to recognise a portrait of Wellington, or of Lord Brougham, however execrable it might be:—anybody, with such materials as their noses being provided, could be taught to draw an unmistakable likeness with a few touches of the pencil. Methinks it would require no very extraordinary acuteness to be able to point out the leader at the head of a flock of sheep; his horns would be an infallible guide; but it would need some observation, and a good deal of practice, to distinguish the face of one sheep from another.

D. I think it would be impossible. There is little or no difference in the faces of a flock of sheep, where their colour is alike.

A. I believe the difference is obvious to the eye of an intelligent shepherd; he knows the individual face of every sheep in his flock, and so does his dog.

D. (with a shrewd grin of incredulity). Well, I think I know enough of the world to differ from you there; if you had said a herd of Niggers instead of a flock of sheep, I would have agreed with you. When I first went out to Surinam, I had some hundreds of them to oversee, and I couldn't see the least chance of ever being able to tell one from another; but I hadn't been over them long when I began to perceive a considerable difference, and now I could tell them as easily as if they were the real sort of men.

A. I quite coincide with your illustration, only I cannot see that they are not as much real men as you or I. But you are refuting your own argument.

D. I don't see it. I come to you and say,—“Now, sir, I want a portrait of myself, that my dog, or anybody else will know; and if you can't do that, you are not likely to reach my standard.” For the sake of argument, we'll suppose a case of life and death. I must have it correctly reported, exactly as I see it. I want none of your perspective—none of your imaginary lights and polishings off; I want the story of my face told as it is: no fact of the case omitted or smoothed down. To please me, you must state every point and portion of it with *equal* and perfect precision; none of your *reserve*, as you call it; no part of the price kept back; you must speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, otherwise you cannot arrive at a true conclusion. Moreover, what you would consider a vast heightener of my appearance, perhaps I should think the very reverse.A. By adopting *your* conceptions, I think we should not arrive at the true conclusion; it would be the death instead of the life of the case.

D. I have no wish to come to that conclusion prematurely; and when I must come to it, I shall not ask you to paint my phiz.

A. You are taking a low view of things; “re-joicing,” as the wise king says, “in thy youth, and walking in the sight of thine eyes.” Youth and inexperience are twins. You wish me to paint you, not as I see you, but as you see yourself. But you never did, and never can see yourself; you only see an inverted copy of your outward form. You see yourself dimly as in a glass, or photograph—your right eye being transferred to the wrong side, and your right hand identified with your left. Whereas I *do* see you in some degree; that is, I see you under one or other of those various aspects of light and circumstance which colour and influence you; just as a landscape is seen under the prevailing sky, changing, as it does, with every passing cloud, from the morning's dawn till the shades of night descend and cover it with gloom and darkness; or leave it visible under the pale light of stars, or the softening beams of an unclouded moon. You have heard of hills and vales rejoicing, and of trees of the field clapping their hands (*Aside*—I am not sure that he has though). Suppose one of them to remonstrate thus with the painter, whose province it is to point out and interpret the meaning of their ever-varying beauties,—“Come now, paint me as I am; none of your perspective—your arrangements of chiaroscuro—your harmonies of colour and

form, and so forth; just take me as you find me—you cannot improve me.” The painter would modestly reply,—“Pardon me, divine creature, I should never think of turning my pencil to so servile a use; I am only poring over your exquisite leaves that I may read and manifest to others the mystery of beauty and of love which it is your high vocation to reveal. Were I to copy you, I should only counterfeit you.”

D. Now, sir, do you expect me to comprehend a rhapsody like that? I hate poetry; and more, I don't believe in it. But I'm wasting your time.

A. Pray do not say so; time is never wasted in helping one another to see what we have either never looked at, or misunderstood. You are a stranger to me only in the usual sense—not on the common ground—of humanity. Your patience has already proved greater than I expected; here is an easy chair for you: I will try and make myself more intelligible.

D. Only let me smoke a cigar, and I'll listen to you for an hour.

(The artist endures this kind proposal of Mr. Dogberry with great equanimity, and tries to make him comfortable.)

D. Well, you are very civil, after all; and I don't mind what you say now: but I cannot see what you mean about copies being counterfeits!—take a cigar, won't you?

(Strange to say, this artist never smokes.)

D. What! don't smoke!—I'm sorry for you, that's all.—But, as I was going to tell you, I saw a sweetly pretty thing the other day in Cheapside—a female's face, done in coloured lithography; I bought it for the matter of a few shillings,—and I can assure you it's better done, and looks fifty per cent. more natural than that seventy or eighty guinea girl's head I saw at the Old Water-Colour Exhibition the other day, by some Frenchman called Carl Haag. And those landscapes, good heavens! that they make such a talk about, by a man—what's his name now—Fox, or Cox, or something. I wouldn't disfigure my drawing-room walls with such dirty-looking splashes—mad pictures, painted for mad people! I saw an old man looking at them as if he was enchanted:—I call that the height of an insane imagination. He couldn't have thought them natural; I never saw anything like them, either in nature, or anywhere else, except in the land of Nod: they are like night-mares, or as confused, at least, as the confusion of dreams. But the strangest fact about them is that people actually buy them. I saw ‘sold,’ upon every one of them. Will you tell me what beauty you see in such things?—it must be something very deep, I suppose.

A. It would be as impossible for me to communicate to your mind any conception of what I see in those pictures, as to make a man who was born stone-blind comprehend what the moon is like. You must first get eyes, and then you must patiently learn to see with them. The mere forms of nature are as literally painted upon the retina of an infant's eye, when it is first opened to the light of heaven, as in yours or mine; but the infant's mind sees little of those shapes and colours, which are given alike to the perfect mirror of every eye made for the light. The organs of vision, in passive silence, exhibit a series of pictures to the mind; but how differently those pictures are seen, or read! The eye itself reads nothing; its function is only to hold up those pictures to the perusal of other faculties, just as it does the pages of a book impressed with letter types.

D. If I understand you rightly, you are complimentary now.

A. I am complimentary, and yet you do not understand me; it is impossible you can understand me; and yet I am not deep as you suppose; I am talking of some of the simplest things in philosophy,—its first principles. It seems to me that your reflections have been confined to the dross of earth; to the mere refuse and dregs of things. You must try and *think*: people do not like the trouble of thinking;—besides, it awakens responsibilities. If you knew better how to estimate the real value of things, and could judge of them according to their comparative merits, you would see yourself, as I now see you, in the aspect of one of those savages who prefer a sixpenny string of coloured glass beads, to a bracelet of orient pearls. You will perhaps retort by telling me that the intrinsic value of such a bracelet is really no greater than that of the glass beads;

and so, by the same kind of reasoning, that a copy—a paste representation—of an empress's brilliants, would be quite as good as the real ones. In short, that the difference between a lie or counterfeit of any kind, and sterling truth, is merely fictitious,—that it all *lies* in the name.

D. Oh, to be sure! I am only one of those savages—I don't pretend to know anything about the deep rules you speak of; I am only one of the ignorant public:—but—I know what pleases myself,—and I think I have as sharp an eye perhaps as you have,—at least everybody says so: I suppose what everybody says must be true. I only pretend to be a member of that ignorant rabble, the public, whose opinions notwithstanding their *profound ignorance, cause and govern* every tide in the affairs of men. What have you to say to that?

A. I have simply to say that, with one exception, your premises are as unsound as your deductions are illogical. I deny the very existence of public opinion! There is no such thing! Under the feet of that richly apparelled automaton, whose brains lie in his stomach, I see the real man that moves the machine. The game is played by various candidates, but the finger of that fictitious figure is certainly not one of them. The real chess-players are poor fellows enough, if we may judge of them by their hat and coat, or their toeless boots: Rousseau, for instance:—one or two of his moves wrapped the French empire in flames, and guillotined a good many who tried to escape!

In the second place, I deny that what everybody says must be true: there is no *truth* in what everybody says:—'tis a mere soulless image of truth set up, the instant it obtains universal suffrage. Let the prototype of that idol, whose excellence is the rage of every ignoramus, only come amongst the multitude again with his threadbare cloak, and his salt herring, as he first appeared, and see how he will be received!

You very modestly disclaim all knowledge of the subject you are debating upon; and sum up your argument by the facts that "you know what pleases yourself, and that your eye is as sharp as mine;" in both these points I certainly concur with you,—especially the latter, which is much sharper than mine, or it would not cut so quickly.—I had a little Scotch terrier, whose greatest sport was cutting holes in my carpets; he once made an unnatural breakfast upon one of my children's caps, and the sleeve of a great coat. I gave him away. The little brute had no heart; he adopted his new master just as readily as he relinquished his former one. The only heroic action he ever did was putting the finishing stroke to the life of a poor bird that a prowling cat had caught, and was playing with its anguish. The terrier, having more powerful jaws, seized the poor fluttering creature—no doubt, to put it out of pain—and bore it off triumphantly. Nothing could induce him to part from it all that day, which he spent carrying it about, and showing his prowess to all the other little dogs he could find.

But in regard to your too generous admission, that you do not pretend to know anything about the art of painting, and that you only profess to be one of the ignorant public,—does it not occur to you that there is some discrepancy between that profession, and your assurance that the coloured lithograph, or photograph, or whatever it may be, which you said you had purchased for a few shillings, is as well done, and more natural than the "Bürgermeister's Tochter," of the highly-gifted artist (he is not French) Carl Haag?—Or the audacity of opening such an uncomplimentary volley of criticism upon the works of David Cox?

D. I don't see it. I only say I wouldn't disfigure my walls with such rubbish; and I'll get ten thousand people to say the same thing, against every unfortunate enthusiast who will take your view of the question.

A. True; at least ten thousand—"whose praise," as Milton says, would be "no small dispraise."

D. Well, the truth is, I do not understand Milton a bit more than I do Mr. Cox—though, I suppose it's all right. I cannot get through Milton; he's too dry for my taste. I've tried him twice—that's giving him a fair chance, is it not? but I can't get on with those angels of his—not to speak of the devils, and all the rest of it:—well, I suppose I mustn't say anything against the like of Milton, but I'll leave him on the book-shelves.

A. Poesy is an angelic language, little spoken or understood where the crowds and tongues of Babel prevail. Its various forms, or dialects, are those graceful sisters we call Painting, Music, Sculpture; they are not denizens of the plain,—but dwell among the cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples of an ideal world which the swarms of vegetative men see not, immured in brick walls, and inhaling the malaria of swamps and cesspools. Man's eye does not readily take in the forms, nor his ear perceive the harmonies that descend from the inaccessible regions of light, in sympathy with the divine instincts of man's living soul. We must *wait* upon them.

Historical, or photographic, truth, which is supposed to consist of *facts*, is at best only true to the letter—not to the spirit of truth; whereas, Poesy is *not* true to the letter, but is true to the spirit. Historical truth is the mere spawn of fallen humanity. No mind in any degree erected above itself is satisfied with things as they now exist. The educated artist endeavours, by his readings and illustrations, to manifest the absolute certainty that in the wide universe there exists not even an unredeemed blade of grass; and that Solomon, in all his artificial glory, was not arrayed like one of these simple beauties of the field.

A good portrait is not a piece of cunning flattery, to excite jealousy by the assumption that mine is a prettier piece of flesh than yours:—it rather aims at representing humanity disrobed of its own filthy rags, and arrayed in garments impervious to moths and sensual stains. The illiterate man of sense is offended with this attempt, and cries out—"Why, he has made a lord of you! It is very like, I can't deny it—but *you* never looked half so well as that! Come, we won't have you set up in this style."

Does it not, I say, occur to you that whilst you profess yourself utterly ignorant of the fundamental principles of the grammar of this language, you are actually assuming the attitude of an adept, competent to probe into the very roots of its verbal criticism,—like the musical gentleman who told me that he did not give it as a mere opinion, but as an unquestionable fact, that Henry Rivell was a greater composer than Beethoven. "What correct ear," said he, "could endure those wild German dissonances? No man likes a discord, whatever he may pretend, for the sake of being thought critical. Take Henry Rivell's beautiful song 'To the North,' and compare it, for instance, with the 'Adeleide,' of Beethoven: you can make sense of the one, but as for the other, why, I can perceive no air in it at all! no tune whatever. And then its harmony, which connoisseurs pretend, or persuade themselves, is so transcendent—what is it?—a high-flown progression of discords and concords, so heterogeneously jumbled up, that it sounds like the grumbling of an orchestra while the various instruments are blowing and scratching themselves into tune. The idea of two contiguous notes, C and D, for example, played together in one chord! Horrible! Give me plain sweet harmonies—such as thirds, fifths, and octaves; I'll leave all the rest to the critics, and the Germans. But I can show you a few of the popular airs of Germany, which, now that I have corrected them, and made common sense of them by changing or throwing out those grating conceits of discords, (my ear is too good to stand jarring sounds of any sort); but now, as I say, that I've made them fit for a Christian, I like them uncommonly well.—I can catch the *air* of them,—that's what pleases people; and, let me tell you, that's the secret why Rivell is so popular; everybody can whistle his' songs;—'To the North, to the North'—beautiful! I could never get tired of that."

D. Who was it said all this? he must have been a conceited goose, whoever he was.

A. I believe he was considered, in his rank, a good judge; he told me he could play upon almost any instrument he had ever seen. No, he was no goose; his ideas upon the subject of musical composition were just what yours are upon painting. His ear was as sharp as your eye; he could instantly detect a discordant assemblage of notes—and he wouldn't have them.

D. O, I assure you he knew nothing about it! Rivell's songs are all very well for barrel organs, and monkies to dance to, but I wouldn't give a penny for them.

A. Perhaps, neither would he give a penny for the coloured photograph you think so excellent; for, strange to say, he drew well, in a small way; and seemed to think nothing of his drawings after all—upon *that* point he had no conceit, and was always delighted when an artist "condescended" as he said, to point anything out to him. I first saw him a few days ago at the Water-Colour Exhibition. He had a book in his hand, and was looking up intently at a little picture by David Cox, the general effect of which he was trying to jot down in his sketch-book. I happened to say:—"I am glad, sir, to see your good taste so far matured." He responded with a pleasing smile, evidently happy to find some one who could sympathize with him. I pointed out several beauties which he had not quite comprehended. He was much pleased, and offered to accompany me part of the way to my studio. We got upon the subject of music in consequence of my having praised some of his little pencil sketches. "Oh," said he, "they are nothing—I am thought a very bad draughtsman by all at home; but they say I *do* understand something about music, and so I have quite given up my drawing, and taken vigorously to music." He then gave me those hints which I have just rehearsed to you.

D. Well, I shouldn't like to be as ignorant of painting as he is of music; I can't see wherein I'm wrong, it seems to me all very simple.

A. Yes, as simple as the science of harmony is to him.

D. But can you give me a good *reason* why a coloured print should not be as fine, and the paints as well laid on, as in what you call a real picture? Explain it so that I can understand you.

A. I cannot promise to do that; but I can make certain assertions which you may consider at your leisure, and you are welcome to come and see me again; perhaps after the castigation of a few weeks you may begin to see a shade of possibility that the toil and arduous research of thirty years have at least given me a little more insight than you probably have attained, who never thought about it at all. . . . A coloured photograph is, at best, no more like a painting, than a coloured print is—and a coloured print bears no better comparison with a picture of merit, than a paste diamond to a real gem; the *life* is wanting, as a jeweller would say, in both. I do not speak to the million, but to the educated and intelligent thousand, more especially to a select portion of it. Even the million are beginning to open their eyes to the simple truth that mechanical painting is no more capable of speaking to man's introverted perceptions, than mechanical music is able to appeal to the human heart. Language, to touch the heart, must emanate from the heart. Poetry and all her lovely sisters—Painting, Music, Statuary, Architecture—are unknown tongues to the million. I knew a child, so passionately fond of music that he would sometimes wait through the sultry hours of a whole summer day, listening, in ecstasy, to the unmitigated grinding of a street organ; but as his faculties gradually expanded under the influence of culture, the same child was forming progressively a higher and yet higher standard of the science of harmonious sounds, its beauties, and its powers.

I do not wish to disparage the camera picture, nor the street organ; they are each, within its own sphere, a public boon, but beyond that sphere, they are much less than inadequate, they are utterly incapable of satisfying the cultivated mind—or even pleasing the natural feelings of good taste—however laboriously finished the sun picture, or accurately constructed the poor Italian boy's organ may be.

You have probably seen Madame Tousseau's famous exhibition of wax figures. They are not only cleverly modelled—but they are correct representations—nay, indisputable likenesses of their originals; Michael Angelo or Canova's sculptures are incomparably less *literally* true. Those wax figures are, indeed, remarkable for their historical accuracy, without the defects of photographic inversion, false perspective, shadow representation of the ethereal vermeil of a lady's cheeks and lips, together with various other inevitable impediments that obviate the promises and pretensions of photography as a substitute for portraiture. In short, it promises you facts, while it is utterly incapable of fulfilling them. But even if it were possible to fulfil them to the very letter, and to "suppose," as Sir Joshua says, "a view of nature represented with all the truth of the camera-

obscure, and the same scene represented by a great artist, how little and mean will the one appear in comparison of the other, when no superiority is supposed from the choice of the subject." Reynolds again says, "If our judgment is to be directed by narrow, vulgar, untaught, or rather ill-taught, reason, we must prefer a portrait by Denner, or any other high finisher, to those of Titian or Vandyck; and a landscape of Vanderheyden to those of Titian, or Rubens, for they are certainly more exact representations of nature." But the man whose perceptions of truth depend upon a mere reference to *facts*, does not see nature, he only looks into the mean details of circumstance, which inevitably tend to shackle and pervert his judgment. The painter of genius does not depart from truth when he throws into eloquent silence whatever is unnecessary to give a fair representation of his subject. Incapability of any such reserve is the very boast of photography. All that is earthly, sensual, and devilish in humanity is, with unscrupulous detail, wrung out by this inquisitorial process, just as the inherent deformities of the human heart are confessed into the ear of the priest. It is not the material and sensuous that should be held up and handed to posterity. Man's body is a glorious temple. I have eyes to see something regal in you—that is, in your humanity—which you do not see, and which I am now striving to point out to your inward sight. All that you have hitherto been cognizant of is a pretty piece of flesh, to paint which would not be painting you, but only what you are at present able to appreciate. We all wish to be judged and reported with lenity, not as the Pharisee describes his brother man, but with that charity which looks with a kindred eye upon every countenance, and is able in some measure to discriminate those essential attributes which, impressed upon the features of the "human face divine" leave, in various degrees, the records of moral beauty, or intellectual power. The painter's vocation is to read and delineate those qualities, for it is within their province alone that the elements of his art are to be found.

D. That's all very well, but it's seldom one finds those indications; and what are you to do with a face where there is no trace of them to be seen?

A. A face without some trace of good, however slight, would not be a human face, but that of a demon. Man's soul, during every moment of his existence on this side of the grave, has either an upward or a downward tendency. It either rises at the call of conscience, or gravitates down, in obedience to the insatiable desires that boil within the centre of our flesh, and feed upon our vital powers, as earth's central fires prey upon and devour her tortured bowels. Divest a man's face of every element of virtue, and you have remaining nothing but the diabolical countenance of the despairing Judas—the liar, thief, murderer. A good portrait is, therefore, an elevation of humanity more to what it should be, than what it literally is. It represents the rising upwards, not the sinking downwards. A man in looking at a good portrait of himself, sees certain indications of a higher and nobler destiny than he generally realizes. He sees some reference to the pristine character of unfallen nature, and says to himself, "I feel that there is something here pointing to higher powers and capabilities than the grovelling resources that so often keep us wallowing in the mire. I will try and always look like that." In short, a good portrait is a kind of didactic epigram which one addresses to one's self, and with which we are at least never offended.

It is the latent poetry, which exists in the commonest productions of nature, that the painter is to elicit and manifest. This is why his imitations are not copies. In every real picture there is some lesson inculcated—some central philosophy to which all the other incidents are subsidiary merely, and consequently, subordinate.

The animal-man, with his external marks, is all that the swineherd sees or is cognizant of in humanity: the spiritual, which is the essential existence, he knows nothing of. He looks at a flower with a similar view and feeling—it is of no use; a cabbage he can understand—he can put it in his pot; but he sees nothing in the flower—it awakens no emotion!

Coleridge says:—"It is a poor compliment to pay to a painter to tell him that his figure stands out of the canvas, or that you start at the likeness of the

portrait. Take almost any daub, cut it out of the canvas, and place the figure looking into or out of a window, and one may take it for life. Or take one of Mrs. Salmon's wax queens, and you will very sensibly feel the difference between a copy, as they are, and an imitation of the human form, as a good portrait ought to be. Look at that flower vase of Van Hysum, and at these wax or stone peaches and apricots! The last are likeliest to their original, but what pleasure do they give? None, except to children."

D. "Copy, as they are, and an imitation, as a good portrait ought to be." Now, I call that palpable nonsense! I don't care who says it, if he were as big as Goliath, I call it nonsense. Copy—imitation—why, they are the same thing! Gold-ridge, or whatever you call him, is making out a flat contradiction.

A. He will tell you what the difference is. "Imitation," says he, "is the mesothesis of Likeness and Difference. The difference is as essential to it as the likeness, for without the difference it would be copy or facsimile. But, to borrow a term from astronomy, it is a librating mesothesis; for it may verge more to likeness, as in painting, or more to difference, as in sculpture."

D. (shaking his head). I don't understand a word of it!

A. I knew that before you told me so.

D. What was the use of telling it me, then?

A. In hope that some spark of emulation may just make your darkness so vaguely visible that you shall begin to suspect the possibility of its existence. And now I will conclude my present illustrations by showing you two passages to prove that I can adduce more recent evidence in favour of my argument than the opinions of Reynolds and Coleridge.

Alluding to the falling off in number of the miniatures at the Royal Academy last year, a writer in the *Illustrated London News* says:—"There will, however, probably be to some extent a reaction when the real character and unavoidable short-comings of photographic portraiture (as so ably explained in an article in the last number—CCII.—of the *Quarterly Review*) are better understood; and, above all, when more general good taste eschews those nondescript productions—coloured photographs—productions which have neither the beauty of Art nor the approximate truth of science, which are neither picture nor photograph, and whose dauby meretriciousness fades in a few months from the chemically-prepared surface which it covers."

One passage from the article referred to in the *Quarterly Review*. "But while ingenuity and industry—the efforts of hundreds working as one—have thus enlarged the scope of the new agent, and rendered it available for the most active, as well as for the merest still-life, has it gained in an artistic sense in like proportion? Our answer is not in the affirmative, nor is it possible that it should be so. Far from holding up the mirror to nature, which is an assertion usually as triumphant as it is erroneous, it holds up that which, however beautiful, ingenious, and valuable in powers of reflection, is yet subject to certain distortions and deficiencies for which there is no remedy. The science, therefore, which has developed the resources of photography, has but more glaringly betrayed its defects. For the more perfect you render an imperfect machine the more must its imperfections come to light; it is superfluous, therefore, to ask whether Art has been benefited, where nature, its only source and model, has been but more accurately falsified. . . . For these reasons it is almost needless to say that we sympathize cordially with Sir William Newton, who at one time created no little scandal in the Photographic Society by propounding the heresy that pictures taken slightly out of focus, that is, with slightly uncertain and undefined forms, 'though less chemically, would be found more artistically beautiful.' Much as photography is supposed to inspire its votaries with æsthetic instincts, this excellent artist could hardly have chosen an audience less fitted to endure such a proposition. As soon could an accountant admit the morality of a false balance, or a sempstress the neatness of a puckered seam, as your merely scientific photographer be made to comprehend the possible beauty of 'a slight burr.' His mind proud Science never taught to doubt the closest connexion between cause and effect, and the

suggestion that the worse photography could be the better Art, was not only strange to him but discordant. It was hard too to disturb his faith in his newly-acquired powers. Holding, as he believed, the keys of imitation in his camera, he had tasted for once something of the intoxicating dreams of the artist; gloating over the pictures as they developed beneath his gaze, he had said in his heart '*ancho io son pittore.*' Indeed, there is no lack of evidence in the Photographic Journal of his believing that Art had hitherto been but a blundering groping after truth, which the cleanest and precise photograph in his hands was now destined to reveal. . . .

"But let us examine a little more closely those advances which photography owes to science—we mean in an artistic sense. We turn to the portraits, our *premiers amours*, now taken under every appliance of facility both for sitter and operator. Far greater detail and precision accordingly appear. Every button is seen—piles of stratified flounces in most accurate drawing are there,—what was at first only suggestion is now all careful making out,—but the likeness to Rembrandt and Reynolds is gone! There is no mystery in this. The first principle in Art is that the most important part of a picture should be best done. Here, on the contrary, while the dress has been rendered worthy of a fashion-book, the face has remained, if not so unfinished as before, yet more unfinished in proportion to the rest. Without referring to Mr. Claudet's well-known experiment of a falsely-coloured female face, it may be averred that, of all the surfaces a few inches square, the sun looks upon, none offers more difficulty, artistically speaking, to the photographer than a smooth, blooming, clean-washed, and carefully combed human head. The high lights which gleam on this delicate epidermis so spread and magnify themselves, that all sharpness and nicety of modelling is obliterated—the fineness of skin peculiar to the under lip reflects so much light, that in spite of its deep colour it presents a light projection, instead of a dark one—the spectrum or intense point of light on the eye is magnified to a thing like a cataract. If the cheek be very brilliant in colour, it is as often as not represented by a dark stain. If the eye be blue, it turns out as colourless as water; if the hair be golden or red, it looks as if it had been dyed; if very glossy, it is cut up into lines of light as big as ropes. This is what a fair young girl has to expect from the tender mercies of photography. . . . Generally speaking, the inspection of a set of faces, subject to the usual conditions of humanity and the camera, leaves us with the impression that a photographic portrait, however valuable to relative or friend, has ceased to remind us of a work of Art at all.

"And, if further proof were wanted of the artistic inaptitude of this agent for the delineation of the human countenance, we should find it in those magnified portraits which ambitious operators occasionally exhibit to our ungrateful gaze. Rightly considered, a human head, the size of life, of average intelligence, and in perfect drawing, may be expected, however roughly finished, to recall an old Florentine fresco of four centuries ago. But '*ex nihilo nihil fit,*' the best magnifying lenses can in this case only impoverish in proportion as they enlarge, till the flat and empty Magog which is born by this process is an insult, even in remotest comparison, with the pencil of a Masaccio."

D. That's good; I can understand that better than any thing you have yet said. I always thought those overgrown photographs rather "too much of a good thing;" when they rise to that climax they ought to speak out at once, and assert all the prerogatives of *live* portraits; a sliding pair of eye-balls, flexible jaws, and a man at a shilling a day to pull the strings, would perfect the conceit. But in regard to the fading of the colours, I don't see so very much objection to that; you know, the man behind with the strings could occasionally add a touch of new paint to freshen the face up a bit!

(The darkness being now visible to Mr. Dogberry's mind, he takes his leave of the artist, promising to return to the studio to see him again ere long—assuring him at the same time, that he now begins to feel considerable interest in the subject of painting.)

A. When a man will only take the trouble to think, the interest is sure to follow.

RONALD CAMPBELL.