

too faithfully the individuality, and because too many individualities are nothing but caricatures of mankind. No doubt a clever painter might be able to represent the same individuals in such a manner that they would all appear gifted with the wisdom appropriate to their mind, rank, and station: the nobleman aristocratic in his bearing, the legislator exhibiting the mind of a Solon, the bishop venerable and dignified, the clergyman evangelical and modest, the Russian prince noble and elegant, the banker important and grand, the writer full of thought and inspiration.

Photography represents people as they are; and painting, as they ought to be, or as they would like to be. The last may be more agreeable to the persons represented; but the first is more satisfactory to those who want the truth, and do not care for the fiction of poetical treatment. In description there is nothing like good, plain, and intelligible prose. For truth there is nothing like a mirror: and is there anything more resembling a mirror than the camera of the photographer?

Ask a mother, whose son is travelling in distant lands and seas, which likeness she prefers—the “*carte de visite*,” or the painted portrait of her dear boy? She may be proud of the latter in its splendid frame, and in showing it to her friends she may exclaim, “Don’t he look handsome! what an agreeable and distinguished expression!” But depend upon it, when her son, with tears in her eyes, will be thinking of her son, but in that elegantly bound album containing some thirty or forty “so-called likenesses,” and, in her case, very justly so called, for among them she finds the real and truthful image of her absent son. With what rapture at the end of twelve months will she open a letter from the young man containing another “*carte de visite*” taken at Calcutta, Hong Kong, or New Westminster, showing him with a grown beard, in his new garb adapted to the country, looking full of health and spirits! Imagine, on the other hand, the pleasure of the son when, in return, his beloved mother has enclosed him in a letter her own “*carte de visite*,” and, perhaps, that of an equally dear sister. I can guess what will be the first and irresistible impulse of his heart: in transport he will press these precious “*cartes de visite*” to his lips! And thou, cold sarcastic critic, hast no other name for photography than *caricature*? “*Mais vous n’êtes donc qu’un barbare!*”

Have you ever understood what is photography? Have you studied the beautiful and unerring principles upon which it is based? If you had, the most imperfect photographic production would be a source of admiration to you. The great Newton himself would have been in ecstasy had he had the good fortune to witness such an unexpected result of some magic property unknown to him of that light he had profoundly investigated during his life, and the principles of which he had so successfully unfolded.

We see the forms of all the works of creation by the light they reflect. The rays being refracted through a lens that nature has placed in front of that wonderful instrument called the eye, form on the delicate membrane of the retina the image of all external objects. The eye, in reality, is a camera obscura, and photography is nothing else; the only difference between the two is, that in the eye each separate ray communicates on the retina the particular colour belonging to it, while in the photographic camera only one ray, called the actinic, can act upon the photographic surface; consequently, the retinal image has all the colours of nature, and the photographic image has no colour, being only like a mezzotint engraving. In every other respect the result is the same, the forms, proportion, and perspective in the camera being as perfect as those depicted on the retina.

Now the science of optics teaches us how to construct lenses producing an image as perfect as that formed by the lens of the eye. If so, why should a photographic picture be distorted more than the natural one? Therefore, let the photographer procure a perfect lens, and, if he knows how to use it, he will produce a representation of objects in their exact forms. With such a lens, and operating upon a very highly sensitive preparation, he will be able to take a portrait in a few seconds, and, in truth, even instantaneously, catching the fleeting expression of the moment. Therefore, if he has the skill and taste to light his model artistically, to place it in a natural and becoming position, waiting for a suitable and pleasing expression of the countenance, he will produce, not a caricature, but the most satisfactory portrait, and by careful management, I have no hesitation in asserting, a flattered likeness of every one.

Notwithstanding the remarks of our critic, the features of women can be photographed as successfully as those of men. Of course, in bad photographs, out of focus and improperly lighted, the strongly marked and hard outlines of men may, without losing all their character, bear a greater amount of defects than the delicate forms of youth and gracefulness. But the apparatus, chemical manipulation, and artistic arrangement which are capable of producing a perfect photograph of men, will do ample justice to the most refined and beautiful features which may grace the other sex. In fact, photography, which can represent the cylindrical curve of a marble column, or the roundness of an ivory ball, only by means of an almost imperceptible gradation of tint, can also by the same means delineate the softness of youth and grace with a perfection which no painter is able to approach by the most delicate touches of his brush.

We have to consider photography as any other art—in its capabilities of perfection, and not as the performance of those who do not understand it. Would it not be the height of absurdity to condemn music because all the day long we hear shrieking songs and the horrid whistling of ragamuffins, as to condemn photography because at every corner we see disgusting photographs? Music out of tune is as intolerable as photographs out of focus. But we must submit to the annoyance to which we are exposed, not only in our walks, but in the drawing-room, where, after having been treated with the sight of the elegantly bound album of “*cartes de visite*,” we are invited to listen in silence to the screaming song of the young lady of the house with an accompaniment upon her piano out of tune. If so many desire to be musicians, why not as many desire to be photographers, when to be so they have only to buy any instrument?

If we wish to hear good music, we go to the opera and the concert-room; and if we want to have and to see good photographs, let us go to some respectable gallery, and not to the “*darky abode*” of some miserable charlatan. Probably there are in London photographic establishments fit to receive good company, where the art is practised with skill and taste, and where correct and pleasing portraits are exhibited.

Our critic has adopted another course, if we may judge from the following description he has given of his photographic trip:—“*Which of us is so fortunate as not to be able to recall sufferings in the inferno of some eminent photographer?—to recollect how, while waiting our turn to pass into the dusky abodes beyond, we surveyed, in all the misery of protracted anticipation, the shadowy forms of those who had before passed under the operation, searching, like bereaved relatives in a Mosque, for the disfigured appearance of a friend.*”

Certainly the writer must be pitied; but has he not richly deserved his fate, if, wishing to have his portrait enshrined in his friend’s album, he has selected for the operation such a strange place as the *inferno* of a photographer?

How can we explain his bad fortune? except by supposing that, having only the Sunday for leisure time, he has been obliged to choose, among the numerous suburban anti-sabbatarian “artists,” an eminent photographer of Wapping, to portray his features by his painful process, and while waiting for his turn in his *darky abode*, he has seen the portraits of some fair creatures as vulgar as clowns at Bartlemy fair!—almost all having a cast in the eye, others having an unmeaning grin, or a silly smile, or a surly frown; one of the young ladies looking saucy, another melancholy, and another having that dangerous look that Petruchio himself would not dare to marry her.

Perhaps, after all, if the critic has got a bad photograph, he has been a most fortunate man, and may be congratulated about his Sunday photographic trip. I am sure he did not leave his heart in the *darky abode* of Wapping, in looking at the portraits of the fair creatures exhibited in the “saloon” of the artist. At the same time, wishing a lucky chance to all “fair creatures,” we warn them, if they wish to be married, never to risk themselves in any *darky abode*, or to visit the *inferno* of the eminent photographer in which our critic had to endure such dreadful sufferings.

107, Regent Street, 25th March, 1862.

FESTIVAL AT M. VOIGTLANDER AND SON’S ESTABLISHMENT.

WE extract the following interesting account of a festival at the establishment of M. Voigtlander and Son, from the *Deutsche Reichs Zeitung* of February 26th:—