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PHOTOGRAPHERS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC COLOURISTS.

It is probable that much of the photographic portraiture of the future will be indebted, more or less, to the pencil of the painter. In small photographs, like card pictures, the amelioration of colour, or of retouching in monochrome, can be easily dispensed with; but in large photographs a number of causes combine to render untouched photography unsatisfactory. It is, on the very threshold, more difficult to produce a perfectly good photograph of large size than it is to produce one of small size; more difficult to compose the picture satisfactorily, either in lines or in masses of light and shade; more difficult to secure satisfactory definition in all parts; more difficult to attain the amount or contrast sufficient for vigour in a large picture, without sacrificing delicacy; more difficult to preserve the plate spotlessly clean; more difficult to get the sitter to retain a satisfactory expression during the prolonged sitting often necessary. If the photograph be faultless, there is not, perhaps, one sitter in a score who will bear the literal faithfulness, the "justice without mercy," of photographic monochrome; the wrinkles and lines, which in nature are ever varying, become rigid and fixed in the photograph; the freckles, &c., which in nature are slight modifications of the local colour, are in the photograph so many small black spots. These, and a variety of other causes, render retouching very frequently desirable, if not absolutely necessary, in large pictures.

There is, moreover, we believe, a growing taste on the part of the public for coloured and retouched work, and the cultivation and satisfaction of that taste in the public are important elements in the commercial success of photographic portraiture. It is probable, therefore, that the craft of the photographic colourist will grow in importance and in demand; and it is important that a proper understanding between the photographer and the colourist, since their interests are so closely allied, should exist, and that their relative duties and immunities should be well defined.

Unfortunately, much of this is very difficult to define, either in relation to the duties of the photographer to his customer, or the duties of the colourist to the photographer. It would appear at first glance that the matter should be very simple; and that it is the first duty of the photographer to furnish a good likeness; and next, that the finishing—whether in colour or monochrome—should be as well done as the price will permit. The duty of the colourist is, of course, to retain the likeness, and devote as much time and skill to finishing the picture as the price he receives will permit. But here comes the difficulty. On the score of the likeness it might be easy to come to a conclusion, although that is at times matter for much difference in opinion; but as to what is excellence in colouring or retouching is a far

different matter. A person of cultivated taste and educated eye may be able, in examining work, to say, "This is good," or, "That is bad;" but he will find it more difficult in many cases to say why it is good or bad, and still more difficult to lay down canons of what constitutes art excellence, or lack of it. And even if this could be done, it would be not less difficult to fix the proper price of a given amount of such excellence.

A curious case, which came partially under public attention last year, illustrates this difficulty. Mr. Ernest Edwards executed a coloured portrait for Lady Cardigan. Her ladyship professed herself highly delighted with the result, writing in highly flattering terms on the subject. Subsequently she ordered another similar portrait, and the Earl of Cardigan also sat for a portrait in the same style, to form a pair, her ladyship expressing a hope that the same colourist who had finished her picture should finish the portrait of the Earl, which was done. When the account was sent in, Lady Cardigan paid for the first portrait and some other matters, and stated that the Earl would pay for the last pair. When the account was submitted to him he grumbled at the amount, and disparaged the pictures, declining to pay the amount in full. A long correspondence ensued, and litigation was imminent, the matter being finally settled by a payment of nearly the full amount, Mr. Edwards making a slight deduction. There the matter might have ended; but the Earl took occasion to denounce Mr. Edwards as a swindler, on an occasion when he was about to photograph the members of a yacht club, the consequence of which was the direct loss of one engagement, and the indirect loss, doubtless, of others. On this ground Mr. Edwards brought an action seeking damages. The Earl pleaded justification, basing his plea on the facts we have stated. As the value of such a plea rested chiefly on the excellence of the pictures and the fairness of the price, it was agreed, by mutual consent, to refer the matter to the decision of an expert, and Mr. T. R. Williams was selected as arbitrator. We have had an opportunity of seeing the shorthand writer's notes of the case, and also of seeing the pictures. Many witnesses were called, the majority of whom—some in strong terms—condemned the work as bad, and the price as exorbitant. We here offer no opinion on the facts, but merely refer to the opinions of experts offered in evidence. The final decision was in favour of Mr. Edwards, who received £100 damages, and costs. The decision on the merits of the photographs would have been a most difficult one; but another element in the case rendered it unnecessary to settle the absolute merits of the pictures. The first portrait was delivered, and others were ordered to be exactly like it; thus the excellence of the work and the reasonableness of the price were admitted by the customer. The only point to be decided was, therefore, were the other portraits as good and as well finished as