

*Concise Instructions in the Art of Retouching.* By Burrows and Colton. (London: Marion and Co, 22 and 23, Soho Square, 1876.)

FOR some years past a conviction has been growing amongst the better class of professional photographers that their art alone, even under the most perfect conditions, is unable to produce an artistically perfect portrait, a proposition, by the way, for which the true artist has all along contended in the face of the constant assertion of the converse by fanatical advocates of "sun-painting" *pur et simple*. The victory having at last rested with the artists, a number of books on retouching have been published, each professing to give the true method of at once producing artistic pictures.

We are glad to see that in the present little work the authors disclaim any such intention, but, on the contrary, proceed solely to instruct their pupils in the work before them, which we may here inform the uninitiated is no less a one than that of restoring, so to speak, on a photographic negative those injuries to a face which may have been caused by imperfect lighting and defects, such as dust, &c., in the film; or disease or physical injury to the face itself. In fact, the art of the re-toucher is to convey to a photograph a certain amount of that idealisation always manifest in the works of the painter, the want of which is the unknown cause so often producing a feeling of dissatisfaction even with the best of photographs.

To carry out their aim, the authors give two very good lithographs of the muscles of the face and head, with two more of the same model covered with the flesh. Two negatives on a flexible film (apparently taken by Warnerke's process) are also added as examples of the work to be done. The descriptive matter is concisely put, and is clear and to the point. We have little doubt that the book will be of service to many amateur and professional portrait photographers.

R. J. F.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

#### Sea Fisheries

I HAD hoped that Mr. Holdsworth, in the rejoinder which he told me he was preparing to my former letter (*NATURE*, vol. xv. p. 55) would have confined himself to defending the assertions he had before made, or at most to rebutting the evidence I had adduced in reply to them. In this case I should have gladly left the matters at issue between him and me to the judgment of the public. Unfortunately he has thought it needful for the sake of the cause he adopts to introduce some new assumptions and charges, conveyed in language of a rather vigorous kind, so that out of regard to the good opinion of your readers, I am driven again to trespass on their forbearance and yours. But in doing this I shall try to be as brief as possible, and however much my friend may have exceeded the limits of a rejoinder, not to follow his example.

All will fully agree with Mr. Holdsworth that an "index is not a *précis*," but few will deny that an index is a valuable aid to mastering the contents of a book. If he says that this particular index is a bad one, I must leave him to settle with the maker of it. If it is neither bad nor good it may be misleading unless the user of it looks pretty carefully into the text. But if it is good, as I believe, it gives the reader the best of all help in acquainting himself with the huge volume, and by its help nobody need fear falling into dangerous mistakes. It does not seem to me that I have fallen into such. The errors which my friend asserts I have made are, if errors at all, very trivial, and as one tells for, and the other against, his views, they may be safely paired off to the detriment of neither side. As to the figures set in the last column of my table, against "Cod and Ling," they ought to have been "33" instead of "38"—a mistake in copying or printing which escaped my observation till now. I freely give Mr. Holdsworth the benefit of it. The next two paragraphs of his letter have afforded me some merriment, though chastened by

the thought that he must have a very low opinion of me if he seriously supposes I am ignorant of the notorious reputation of the dog-fish. Whether "predatory fishes," however, are necessarily "mischievous," so that the two epithets should be closely linked together, as though one was the consequence of the other, is a large question, upon which I shall not enter. But surely it is obvious that the prevalence of predatory fishes is more or less a measure of the prevalence of their prey, and as the blind man judged of the value of the field by asking how many thistles grew on it, so may we judge of the abundance or scarcity of other fishes by the abundance or scarcity of the dog-fish. Might I here apply to Mr. Holdsworth an expression of his own to myself, and say that, from these paragraphs, I am justified in believing him unable to comprehend one of the simplest relations of animal life?

As to herrings, I pretend to no greater knowledge of their natural history than other people do. I do not see why I should be accounted more ignorant, or attempting to conceal that ignorance, by any mysterious evolutionary process from my inner consciousness or elsewhere. The herring is admittedly not ubiquitous in the sea, *i.e.*, it has, like other animals, its more or less definite range. It therefore has "borders," though even Mr. Holdsworth cannot lay them down exactly. My friend is pleased "to doubt very much" whether I "had given five minutes' attention to the practical study of the habits of the herring—to its life-history" before I wrote my Glasgow address. That rather depends on what may be called "practical study." Has Mr. Holdsworth ever heard of a "water-telescope"—an instrument of which I can find no mention in his book—or has he ever looked through one? If, when the days get a little longer and the steamers are running conveniently, he will cross to Norway and follow the coast to the Lofoden Islands (perhaps he need not even go so far), he will possibly appreciate the value of these remarks, and will be doing what I did more than twenty years ago.

The next five paragraphs of Mr. Holdsworth's rejoinder seem to contain very fair comments on what I had urged, and, though I do not thereby assent to them, I may say that had the rest been of apiece with them I should not now be troubling you. I must, however, express my disappointment that in what follows no definite information is given as to the sea-fishes which are so often said to be devoured by sea-birds. Here is room for almost any amount of new and interesting observations, whether those observations affect his argument or not. He, not I, introduced the topic, for reasons I suppose known to himself, but not to be guessed at by me. He now seems to consider it, as I did, irrelevant.

Then as to Prof. Baird's reports. Far be it from me to find fault with my friend for fishing out the two passages which, as he thinks, tell in his favour. But these relate to two particular kinds of fishes<sup>1</sup>—the alewife and the cod—the former mainly as furnishing food to the latter, and I never said that to over-fishing *only* was the diminution in every case due. The decrease of the cod is ascribed by Prof. Baird to the decrease of the alewife, and this, he says, is caused by the erection in the tidal rivers of impassable dams or of weirs by means of which every fish ascending the river to spawn was caught. Surely this was "over-fishing." In the first of his reports this question is considered far more generally and closely than in the second, from which Mr. Holdsworth's extracts are taken, yet there is nothing in the latter really to contradict the conclusions arrived at in the former. Hence I infer that they are still upheld by their author, and their nature may be seen by the following citations from his "General Summary of Results" (Part I., pp. 38, 39):—

"I. The alleged decrease in the number of food-fishes in these waters within the last few years has been fully substantiated.

"II. The shore-fishes have been decreasing during the past twenty years, gradually at first, but much more abruptly from about the year 1865, the reduction by the year 1871 being so great as entirely to prevent any successful summer-fishing with the hook and line, and leaving to the traps and pounds the burden of supplying the markets. This statement applies also, but perhaps to a certain extent, to the blue-fish. The decrease in their numbers first manifested itself about ten years ago, and is going on quite rapidly until now.

"III. This period of decrease represents the time during which the traps and pounds have been well established, their operations

<sup>1</sup> The menhaden and the mackerel are indeed mentioned, but incidentally and with some uncertainty.