

Ellen E. Hebron, "Lines," (a poem) 9 December 1874

(keywords: history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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LINES

[The writer of the following will soon have a volume of poems before the public. This may be regarded as a specimen of her poetic composition.—ED. ADV.]

Composed on hearing a young lady remark that "God had no daguerreotype."

Go view the glowing landscape in the Spring's first opening prime,
While budding leaves and blooming flowers, in sweetest pantomime,
With minstrel birds and murmuring brooks, dispel the wintry gloom,
And nature's gleeful concert breaks the silence of the tomb;
Then ask thyself, while gazing on all things so bright and fair,
Is not thy God's daguerreotype in part depicted there?

Go view the mighty, soundless depths of ocean as it rolls,
With roar eternal, from the great equator to the poles;
Its water-loving tribes, its caves bestrewed with jewels bright,
Its coral grottos, walks of shell by glistening pearls made white,
And say, does not its vastness, power, convince your heart that He
In glorious outline has impressed His image on the sea?

Go hear Niagara's thundering tones of majesty and might,
Behold the awful gulf below, with loud waves crested white,
While high above the radiant bow of Love and Mercy's hung,
Bright now as when the cataract its first loud anthem sung;
Can thoughtful mind dwell on the scene without a quick assent
That with it His great likeness, too, indelibly is blent?

Upon the starry skies at eve His image we may trace,
While solar gems as chandeliers His pictured presence grace;
Throughout Creation's vast expanse, 'tis partially denied,
Where'er the proofs of matchless Love and changeless Truth abide;
But when the whole daguerreotype is pictured full and great,
Eternity's the artist, and the Universe the plate.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

The use of the daguerreotype in this poem is informative as the process had been out of favor for fifteen years. When the author speaks of "His great likeness," it is the truthful, unchanging and brilliant daguerreotype that is chosen for this metaphorical use.

While published here without stating the author, the poem is included in a volume of poetry by Ellen E. Hebron published the following year. See Ellen E. Hebron, *Songs of the South* (Baltimore: Eugene R. Smith, 1875): 197–98.¹ In the volume, one word in the last stanza is corrected: "denied" is replaced with "descried."

A biographic entry for Hebron provides this information:

Mrs. Hebron, whose maiden name was Ellington, was born in 1839, and died in 1904. Her husband was Dr. John L. Hebron, a prominent physician and planter. A woman of deep religious convictions, she was a leader in the work of the W. C. T. U. in Mississippi. She was an honorary member of the State Press Association. Her published works are: "Songs from the South," which appeared in 1875, and "Faith, or Earthly Paradise, and Other Poems," published in 1890. Her home was in Vicksburg.²

1. <http://books.google.com/books?id=19sCAAAAYAAJ>

2. Earnestine Clayton Deavours, *The Mississippi Poets* (Memphis: E. H. Clarke & Brother, 1922): 86–87.

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