

“Address to Daguerre,” (poem) 1 October 1851

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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For the Daguerreian Journal.

ADDRESS TO DAGUERRE.

If in that visionary land where sense
Can only rove in feeble impotence,
That land that Poets dream of when they lie
In some rich wood veiled from the glowing sky,
O'er canopied and draped by gorgeous trees
That stretch their giant arms to court the breeze,
Or sweeping downwards towards the teeming earth
Embrace the loving soil that gave them birth:
What time the bee, tired with his noontide quest,
Hastes to lay down her burthen and to rest,
Whilst some gay streamlet wandering to the sea,
Now murmurs to the sweet bank lovingly,
Fondles the water-lilies as they rest
So trustingly upon her gentle breast,
Now dashes onward with impetuous force,
As rocks and stones impede her placid course,
Chattering and prattling as she bounds along,
Lulling the groves with her untiring song,
Sinking at length into the sheltering sea,
As tired man seeks the breast of Deity.

If in that far off land of mystery,
Towards which the Christian turns his hopeful eye
Bright spirits purified can gaze below,
On scenes of mortal love and mortal woe;
Child of the Sun! thrice favor'd child, Daguerre!
What bliss from this earth follows thee e'en there.

Yon Mother note—grief on her brow sits dark,
Remembrance plays the traitor, * and the spark
Of memory o'erwrought no more will paint
The loving look of him, her all; and faint,
And sad, with eager struggling, “God,” she cries,

“Give me back my boy to greet these loving eyes;
In vain, in vain, I labor to retrace
Each happy look of his beloved face.”

Such *was* her picture—but behold her now,
Despair no more writes furrows on her brow,
Her hand a treasure grasps—his smile is there,
Winning her weary soul from all its care.
From far off lands that picture came to bless,
And cheer her in her widow’d loneliness;
And mingled in her earnest, frequent prayer,
Recording angels hear *thy* name DAGUERRE!

Thro’ the rich fields of science eager treading,
What joy, oh sage! was thine, when dimly spreading,
O’er the pure silver, earthly forms grew clear,
First struck by Phoebus in his mid career,
When panting in his noontide fervor bright.

The glorious God rushed down on wings of light,
And touch’d the ore, but gave to thee the clue,
T’ unveil the mystery to human view.

Blest shade! farewell, here thy career is o’er,
To earthly praises thou wilt bow no more;
But who can tell what homage may be given
Th’ enfranchised soul in the wide fields of heav’n.
Great shade! I hail thee, in the mansion there,
While thousands yet unborn shall bless thy name,
DAGUERRE!

* It is a well known fact that some persons have not the power of retaining a resemblance in the mind.

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

The author of this effusion is unknown.

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