

George W. Bungay, "Hale's Picture Gallery," 13 August 1853

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HALE'S PICTURE GALLERY.

WHEN, nearly half a century ago, Sir Humphrey Davy, in conjunction with Mr. Wedgewood, first attempted to produce impressions of external objects on prepared paper placed in the camera obscura, how little did they imagine, that, not many years after their death, the idea would become a practical thing, and the most brilliant results be obtained. To mere matter-of-fact minds, the notion that a shadow could be so fixed on paper or plate as to be permanently fixed there, would be regarded as an impossibility. And when within our own recollection, the discoveries of Mr. Fox Talbot, M. Daguerre, and M. Niepce, were announced, there were not a few, even in these days of scientific progress, who received the announcements with incredulity, mingled with a lofty scorn for those who asserted the fact of such apparent impossibilities.

But the fact remained; and the skeptics were forced to acknowledge this great discovery, when, upon metallic plates were represented not only the images of houses, trees, fields and churches, but absolute likenesses of living individuals. Soon, through the liberality of the French Government, the secret of Daguerre was made public, and then, with a rapidity perfectly unparalleled, improvements were made, until miniature-painters trembled over their slowly developed drawings, and an entire revolution in the art of portrait-painting was thought to be at hand.

Foremost in the ranks of scientific men of all countries, who eagerly sought to improve this important art so as to render it extensively available, were, as was to be expected, American citizens. With all their energy, enthusiasm, and practical characteristics, they soon led the way in the march of discovery; and the result has been that, at this moment, there are, in no part of the world, Daguerrotypes to be found which can for one moment be compared with those produced in this country; and this is not owing, as some have asserted, to the peculiar clearness of our atmosphere, or the extra brilliance of our skies, but to superior American skill in operating, for Americans in London and Paris produce better pictures than either English or French Artists, who experiment under the same atmospheric conditions.

Foremost on the list of American Daguerrotypists, stands Mr. L. H. Hale, of 109 Washington street, Boston. That gentleman's productions we have inspected with critical eyes, just as we should nicely scrutinize a gallery of paintings; for like such, these photographic pictures are works of art. This cannot always, indeed, it can but seldom be

said of the flat, toneless, cadaverous objects that are exhibited as specimens of sun portrait painting. Mr. Hale happily combines artistic taste with the skill of the manipulator. And this is all essential, for it is as necessary for a taker of Daguerrotypes, as it is for a painter in oils or water colors to be thoroughly acquainted with the rules of art. Ignorant of such he knows not how to manage his lights and shadows, to arrange his accessories harmoniously, to group his figures, and to produce a *coup deil* which shall please the eye of taste. And, though some may think it of no consequence, he should have a judicious eye for colors, for to the Daguerrotype process this is very essential, seeing that different tints differently affect the plate. A glance at the very superior productions of Mr. Hale convinces any one, qualified to judge of such matters, that he is, as we said, a true artist, as well as a capital Daguerrotypist.

Mr. Hale has now been engaged in the business of Daguerrotyping upwards of twelve years. Determined to place himself at the head of his profession, he set to work to surmount difficulties, that, to less ardent minds, would have appeared insuperable. And these obstacles were many; but what will not skill and perseverance accomplish? Step by step he mounted the ladder of success, and now he stands at its summit, having fairly distanced all competitors. Sir Joshua Reynolds said that he never painted a portrait without making a picture also. And so it is with Mr. Hale's likenesses; they are all pictures, produced by artistic treatment, not staring absurdities which offend by their ghastliness, but living, almost breathing realities, finely toned, with great breadth of surface, and as true artistic productions as pictures from the pencil of Lawrence, or the easel of Willard.

In point of accommodations for sitters, no rooms we have ever seen can, for one moment, compare with those of Mr. Hale. On entering from the street, we pass a splendid series of specimens in cases, which, for a time, delays us. Passing on we ascend a few stairs, and find ourselves in a suite of large, and splendidly furnished rooms; rich carpets cover the floor, and gorgeous paper the walls. Quite a miniature aviary with its gaily plumed, fluttering warblers, impart an air of life and cheerfulness. Nor is other music wanting if required, for a superb musical box, and a fine piano-forte are visible. Then the toilet rooms are beautiful, and fitted up with all the requisites that beau or belle may require. Fine prints and busts are arranged around, and screens here and there stand ready for gradations of light and shade. Even toys are provided to attract the attention of children when sitting. Among the pictures we noticed two finely painted landscapes by Bentel, and a charming picture of "Hope" by H. Willard. On a centre-table stood vases and flower pitchers, &c., filled with the coldest Cochituate, and sofas, easy chairs, lounges, &c., were provided for the lingerers in that temple of taste.

Not a slight advantage in Mr. Hale's operation, is the rapidity with which it is accomplished. Children can be taken as perfect as grown persons. It is universally admitted that children always make the most interesting pictures in Daguerreotypes. This no one will deny who has a taste for the beautiful; but it requires great skill, as well as a peculiar tact, to produce pleasing results and a perfect delineation of life. Mr. H. has, by dint of perseverance and long practice, overcome all obstacles in this department, it having been the theme of his constant study for several years. The time required for producing a picture of a child, from one to three years old, varies only from two to three seconds; therefore no one can fail to see the certainty of a favorable result.

Mr. H. attends personally to the operating department, thereby securing his services, to those who may favor him with their patronage.

We think we have now said enough to show, that, in point of excellence, Mr. Hale's pictures stand pre-eminent, and that as an influential journal says of his establishment, is "without doubt, *the* Daguerreotype establishment of Boston. The luxurious and tasteful style of his spacious rooms will suit the most fastidious visitor. On one side of the operating room a handsomely fitted dressing-room for ladies is attached, and on the other, a reception room, with all the elegancies of a refined home—music, pictures, birds of rare specimens, and flowers and books. These render waiting rather a pleasure than otherwise, (unless one is singularly devoid of taste), as the throngs of callers can testify."

We may here add this branch of art affords employment directly, and indirectly, to an immense army of persons of both sexes; carvers, gliders, frame-makers, plate manufacturers, to say nothing of the manufacturing of iodine, and lenses, &c., &c: In a commercial point of view, there is scarcely another profession which exerts a wider influence. Importers, wholesale and retail dealers in Daguerreotype materials, are all more or less benefitted by this business. The painter must exercise his skill, in picture painting to adorn the walls of the Daguerreotypist. The upholster must employ his ingenuity in fitting up and furnishing the apartments devoted to this department of art. The presence and the services of an accomplished lady is needed in every such an establishment, and if she is handsome, so much the better, for nothing can better prepare a sitter with a complacent countenance, or, rather, we should say, with calm and easy naturalness of face and manner, than to be waited upon by a pleasant and pretty woman. We all frown upon the awkward and coarse Caliban, while we admire the graceful and handsome Ariel. We will conclude this sketch with the following off-hand verses.

SUN PAINTING.

Time was, when artists labored long,
To paint a likeness folks call "strong,"
 An e'en then often failed;
For sitter tired of sitting grew;
And critic-folks—a savage crew,
 The limner's work assailed.

But in these latter days we see
An artist of great certainty;
 The sun's a painter fine.
You sit, and for a moment wait,
And lo! upon the polished plate
 He flashes his design!

Then who would "sit" for weary hours
Day after day when artist powers
 E'en when all's done may fail;
Far better patronize the sun
Whose work must be *correctly* done
 Whene'er 'tis done by Hale.

[End of text. Several misspelled words exist in this text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Biographical information, along with a lithograph portrait of Hale, is found in R. W. Keyes, "Luther Holman Hale and the Daguerrean Art," *Photographic Art-Journal* (New York) 1:6 (June 1851): 357–58.¹

The author of this text, George Washington Bungay (1818–1892), was also a poet and Temperance promoter. He is perhaps best known for his book, *Crayon Sketches and Off-hand Takings, of Distinguished American Statesmen, Orators, Divines, Essayists, Editors, Poets, and Philanthropists* (Boston: Stacy and Richardson, 1852).

See also number 36 of this series for the text, "Daguerreotype Materials," which is a review of the daguerreotype stock establishment of Benjamin French.²

The nature of Bungay's series, "American Enterprise," is explained in the following notice:

To Merchants and Manufacturers.

Under the auspices of some of our Merchant Princes and leading Manufacturers, the subscriber has commenced a series of elaborate sketches of our prominent Commercial, Mechanical, and other Industrial establishments. These articles are published in the "WAVERLEY MAGAZINE," a well-known and widely circulated journal, printed weekly, in this city. This magnificent Magazine is printed with handsome type, on beautiful white paper, and contains more reading matter than any other publication in the world. It has an immense circulation, not only in New York and New England, but it finds its way to every State in the Confederacy and to the British Provinces. These truthful and graphic sketches are read at least by sixty thousand persons, consequently forming splendid advertisements. The writer makes a personal visit to the establishment he describes, and each sketch occupies from one to two columns of closely printed matter,—for which he charges the sum of ten dollars. Travelling expenses are added to this when he is called from the city. Without additional cost these articles appear in the elegant *monthly*, issued from the same office, and will be eventually collected in a volume, thus forming a permanent record of American Enterprise. The following establishments with others have already been sketched:

Simmon's Block, (Clothing;) Gove's Palace, (Clothing;) Hinckley & Drury's Locomotive Works; Jones, Ball & Co.'s Silver Ware Palace; G. W. Warren's Dry Goods House; Dana, Farrar & Hyde's Wholesale Grocery; Boston Belting Company; New England Cordage Manufactory; Hunneman's Fire Engine Manufactory; Gavett's Lamp Manufactory; Seth W. Fowle's Drug Store; Reed's Music Store; Boston Sugar Refinery; Boston Flour Mill; Boston Iron Works' Wentworth's Marble Works; Chillson's Stove Warehouse; Jacob Chickering's Piano-Forte Establishment; Prouty's Plough Establishment; Doe, Hazelton & Co.'s Furniture Palace, &c., &c.

Those who desire to patronize this novel mode of advertising their business will meet with an immediate response by directing a note to the subscriber, at his Dental Room, 165 Court Street, Boston.

GEORGE W. BUNGAY.³

Although not part of the series, another article of interest in this publication is a sketch of the Boston daguerreotypist, Jesse Stone. See "Daguerrean Gallery," 7:26 (24 December 1853): 414.⁴

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510009_HALE_PAJ_1851-06.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8530008_FRENCH_WAVERLEY_1853-08-03.pdf

3 *Waverly Magazine* (Boston) 7:2 (9 July 1853): 21.

4. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8530010_STONE_WAVERLEY_1853-12-24.pdf

P8530009_HALES_WAVERLEY_1853-08-13

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