

M. P. Simons, "An Exquisite Picture," 22 June 1871

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An Exquisite Picture.

IN the early days of daguerreotyping, when our chief—I might say only—ambition was to get a picture without those dull, black shadows that, like some genius of a Rembrandt, ever haunted our first dark dawnings in the art, when artistical and picturesque effects gave us but little, if any concern, I had the pleasure of daguerreotyping one of the most charming pictures of an infant I have ever seen. The mother of the wee subject, like most mothers, wanted her darling taken alone and full-length—always, as is well known, a most trying task, and this time particularly so; for, at every effort I made to perform it, I was opposed by my little sitter to the full extent of his tiny lungs; and, although tiny, to such an extent that I was about giving it up as a thing impossible to accomplish, when a large Newfoundland dog belonging to the family, who had been all this time anxiously watching the mysterious operation, now thinking that his young master was being rather roughly dealt with, stepped proudly up to his side, and, with an air of defiance, stood for a moment looking me full in the face, and then gently nestled his head in the child's lap. This acted like magic upon his fair companion, who instantly changed his countenance from fear and distress to that of conscious security; and, throwing his fat, dimpled arm around his noble protector's neck, remained perfectly quiet and composed, seeming to say—if smiles say anything—"Touch me now, if you dare!" What a picture was this, so natural and so perfectly beautiful! I could not think of letting it pass away, like a morning's dream, without trying to catch its shadow. Everything now was favorable; all in the room were still—all, indeed, seemed spell-bound. I was afraid to stir, lest I might break the charm and spoil this beautiful picture. My plate had grown sensitive by standing. With breathless silence I drew the shield, and in an instant was fixed upon silver a picture worthy of being wrought in gold.

M. P. SIMONS.

PHILADELPHIA, June 22d, 1871.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Additional information regarding Montgomery Pike Simons can be found in Laurie A. Baty, "...and Simons." Montgomery Pike Simons of Philadelphia (ca. 1816–1877)," *Daguerreian Annual* 1993: 183–200.

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