

Anna Hanson Dorsey, "Woodreve Manor," (selected text) 1852

(keywords: Anna Hanson Dorsey, Jesse Whitehurst, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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Two selected passages published in:

Anna Hanson Dorsey, *Woodreve Manor: or, Six Months in Town* (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1852): 231–33. [Chapter 16]

I was passing a Daguerrean gallery, and, observing a number of fancy sketches in a large frame at the door, curiosity impelled me to enter. Ascending a flight of steps, I opened the door at the top, and found myself in a handsome saloon, the walls of which were covered with the finest specimens of the art I ever saw. I inspected one after another, moralizing on the progress of the age, and wondering at the almost magical fidelity of the delineations around me. There was old age, youthful beauty, manhood, and the faces of young, innocent children, unflattered all—and all wonderfully distinct, yet the contour of every face so softly rounded; and the expression of every eye so soul-beaming—be patient, madam, I am nearly at the point of my adventure—I at last approached the only cluster of specimens I had not examined. A party of Indian chiefs, in their war-costume and wild-woods bravery, each in a separate frame, hung around in a circle, a fierce, ruthless-looking crew; and in their midst, looking so sad and beautiful, in his picturesque garb, what should I see but my young Italian! I wanted to tear it down from such ungenial companionship, and place it in my bosom! . . .

When they arrived at the Daguerrean gallery, they were politely received by the artist, who was at the moment disengaged, and invited to examine the specimens of his wonderful art. Every luxury that a liberal and refined taste could provide contributed to the gratification of those who visited it. Fauteuils, lounges, marble tables covered with books and flowers, musical instruments and rich draperies, gilding, and brilliantly dyed carpeting, attracted for a moment the scrutiny of the party, as something indicating the rapid progress of the times towards a high state of refined luxury. Both gentlemen complimented the artist on the handsome coup-d'oeil of his arrangements, then turned to the innumerable faces which, almost breathing, smiled down on them from the massive frames that enshrined them.[†] Mrs. Willoughby was insensibly interested; these were the first she had seen; but Mr. Bedford, always enthusiastic in his admiration for everything connected with the progress of art, could not refrain from expressing again and again his gratification, in terms which were highly complimentary to the enterprising proprietor. He quite forgot the object for which he suspected he was brought hither, and, like a child turned loose in a garden of flowers, scarcely knew where he should award the preference. Mr. Moysa went into another apartment to inspect one of the large cameras, and had yielded to the request of an assistant operator, whose artist eye was much struck with his remarkable and handsome face, to sit; a moment sufficed, and the plate on which the impression was made being taken into an adjoining room to be submitted to chemical

tests, he strolled back to the gallery just as Mr. Bedford paused before the miniature of the young Italian. . .

[†] Whitehurst's handsome gallery is here referred to.

[End of selected text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

This work of fiction includes the above-noted scenes taking place in a daguerreotype gallery. However, the author references the gallery of Jesse Whitehurst.

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