

Rebecca S. Nichols, "The Daguerreotype," (poem) 1851

(keywords: Rebecca S. Nichols, Ezekiel C. Hawkins, John Sartain, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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Selected text published in:

Rebecca S. Nichols, *Songs of the Heart and the Hearth-Stone* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1851): 106-7.

THE DAGUERREOTYPE

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INSCRIBED TO E. C. HAWKINS, ESQ.  
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"I HAVE brought you a beautiful bird, mamma!—
A bird without feather or wing;
They said, if I spoke not a word, mamma,
The birdie MIGHT whistle and sing!

"Then they caught it, and put it in here, mamma
And fastened it close in its case;
And they told me to bring it to dear mamma,
And ask here to show me its face."

I opened the clasp, and before me there sat,
Like an alderman, filling his chair,
A queer little rogue, with a mantle and hat,
And solemn and wondering air!

Enraptured I gazed, while the dear little elf
Stood pleading, in vain, to be heard:—
"You look a long time, now I want it MYSELF;
Oh, mamma, do give me the bird!"

Thou lark of my bosom, thy dear infant voice
Is sweeter by far to my ear
Than melodies warbled, where forests rejoice,
In the brightness and bloom of the year.

Thou'rt nestled away in the folds of my heart,
Like youth on the bosom of Love;
Oh! never may fowler allure with his art
My sweet "tassel gentle" to rove.

Though storm-winds may rise, and sunder the bough
That shelters thine innocent head,
Yet while it ha vigor to shield the, as now,
No tempest need fill thee with dread.

The artist who drew my young bird in his snare,
And penciled, with beams of the sun,
A picture with truth, life, and beauty so rare,
Has fairly a recompense won.

I've coined him a verse from the mint of the mind—
The trifle to him shall belong:—
With many warm wishes, both friendly and kind,
Sir Artist, accept of this Song.

[The following portrait serves as the volume's frontispiece:]



[caption:] Rebecca S. Nichols / Engraved by J. Sartain from a daguerreotype by E. C. Hawkins

[End of text.]

The graphic is also available in JPG format:

http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/graphics/B8510002_NICHOLS_HEARTH-STONE_1851.pdf

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Rebecca S. Nichols, then residing in Cincinnati, achieved recognition as a western writer. Nichols sometimes wrote under the pseudonym, "Moina." See William Henry Venable, *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley: Historical and Biographical Sketches* (Cincinnati: Robert Clark & Co., 1891): 281–82; William Turner Coggeshall, *The Poets and Poetry of the West: with Biographical and Critical Notices* (New York: Follett, Foster & Co., 1864): 290–302. The latter title provides twelve poems by Nichols and a biographical notice. Additional information regarding Nichols is found on the web site of Library Company of Philadelphia, *Portraits of American Women Writers*.¹ See also Bertha-Monica Stearns "Early Western Magazines for Ladies," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 18:3 (December 1931): 319–301.

The Cincinnati daguerreotypist, Ezekiel Hawkins, received the dedication of this poem. Hawkins also took the daguerreotype of Nichols that serves as the frontispiece portrait of this volume.

A daguerreotype of Nichols is mentioned in a review of Hawkins' gallery in "Hawkin's [Hawkins—ed.] Daguerre Pictures," *Botanico-Medical Recorder* (Cincinnati) 12:10 (23 March 1844): 159.²

1. http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits/nichols_rebecca.htm

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/B8510002_NICHOLS_HEARTH-STONE_1851.pdf

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