

Benjamin Hathaway, "To a Daguerreotype," (poem) 1892

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Selected text published in:

Benjamin Hathaway, *The Finished Creation: and Other Poems* (Boston: Arena Publishing Co., 1892): 184–86.

TO A DAGUERREOTYPE.

Oh! THOU art, in beauteous seeming,
Most queenly of maidens and rare
That ever this heart in its dreaming
Involed in each vision so fair;
Though knowing thou art but a shadow;—
Yet not a frail shadow of air.

Thou art Love's incarnate Ideal,
The truest I ever may see;
What glory immantles the Real,
If such but the semblance may be!
Is substance not more than the shadow?
And beauty eternal with thee!

These charms, like a halo around thee,
Were rained from a radiant face;
One ravishing, ripe look hath crowned thee
With royalest, maidenly grace;
Thou beauty of mortal immortalized;—
Thou child of the sunshine's embrace!

What though on that fair brow no luster
Of life's mystic changes is met,
Yet there all the graces do cluster,
And Thoughts starry signet is set;
And Wrong never wrought in its chamber,
To waken a life-long regret.

What though no fond spirit may lighten
These orbs with love's tremulous ray,
Nor glance of affection, to brighten
Life's seasons, so leaden and gray;
No turbulent midnight may darken
Their noon of perpetual day.

Though never these cheeks, where are thronging
The tints of all roses that blow.
Shall thrill with love's passion and longing,
Nor bliss of warm kisses may know;
They never with tears shall be clouded,
Nor paled with long-waiting and woe.

What though of these dear lips, delicious,
No heart-healing accents are born,
Yet,—pardon the thought, if malicious,—
Their silence no discord must mourn;
Dear lips! that, if mute in Love's summer.
Are hushed in the winter of scorn.

When lone in the midnight of sorrow
I sigh for endearing caress,
And dream of love's beautiful morrow.
Thy pure lips for comfort I press:
Oh joy! if no soul-thrilling rapture,
A joy that shall never be less.

O Love ! while the song-birds are mating
And singing in garden and tree.
Where in the wide world art thou waiting,
That only thy shadow I see?
This heart for thy coming is sighing:—
The home-nest is builded for thee.

[End of selected text]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

The "Content" page of the volume lists this poem as among "Earlier Poems."

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