

***“The Photographic or Daguerreotype Miniatures,” 24 March 1841***

(keywords: Richard Beard, Alexander Wolcott, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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**THE DAGUERREOTYPE: AN ARCHIVE OF SOURCE TEXTS, GRAPHICS, AND EPHEMERA**

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Published in:

*Times* (London) No. 17,626 (24 March 1841): 6.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC OR DAGUERREOTYPE MINIATURES.—Yesterday, at the Polytechnic Institution, Cavendish-square, the adaptation of the French or American discovery in miniature taking by the reflection of light, known by the various titles of the “Daguerreotype type,” the “Electrotype type,” and “the Photographic system,” was publicly witnessed for the first time in the metropolis. The discovery of this very extraordinary and ingenious device, by which limners stand a fair chance of being ruined, is claimed by different scientific individuals of different countries, and the principle of its application has been long known to the world, but the attempts generally which have been made effectively to adapt it to its intended use have hitherto been a failure. Owing, however, to the enterprising energy of Mr. Beard, the patentee of Mr. Walcott’s [Wolcott] apparatus (the latter of whom we believe is an American), the principle has been so far perfected as to be almost incapable of further improvement. The novelty attendant upon the fact of being furnished in the short space of five seconds with a more correct miniature likeness than the most accomplished artist could paint on ivory, after days of laborious study, coupled with the fineness of the weather, drew together a host of curious fashionables, so many indeed, that notwithstanding the short period of time occupied in the operation, the room was crowded for hours together by parties anxiously waiting their turn. The apartment appropriated for the magical process—for so it may be termed—is well calculated for the object desired, being on the highest story of the institution. From the roof, which is constructed of blue glass of about a quarter of an inch thick, a very powerful light is obtained, and it is so ingeniously contrived as to revolve with the sun. In a portion of the room, nearly in the centre, an elevated seat is placed, on which the party whose likeness is to be taken sits with his head reclining backwards. In this position the sitter is told to look into a glass box, in an opposite direction, about five feet from him, in which is placed the metallic plate to be impressed with the portrait. Having done so for a few seconds, he descends, and in a few minutes afterwards a faithful likeness is presented to him. The likenesses which we saw were admirable, and closely true to nature, beauties and deformities being alike exhibited: therefore those who are ashamed of the personal appearance had better keep from the influence of the electrotype.

**[End of text.]**

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**EDITOR’S NOTES:**

This text appears the day after the 23 March 1841 opening of Richard's Beard first studio atop the Royal Polytechnic Institute.

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