

***“How Miss Hobbs Found Her Bracelet,” 15 January 1857***

(keywords: “Miss Hobbs”, Alexander Hesler, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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**HOW MISS HOBBS FOUND HER BRACELET.**

Miss Hobbs was a spinster. Miss Dobbs, by some years her junior, was her bosom friend. The twain were Damon and Pythias in the feminine gender, David and Jonathan reproduced in calico and crinoline. Miss Hobbs confided in Miss Dobbs, and Miss D. returned the sweet confidence with a fervor which met Miss H. rather beyond the half-way line.

Of course Miss Hobbs showed Miss Dobbs “all her things,” never would have omitted doing so “for worlds,” or for any other equivalent whatever. The twain were well known at the counters of dry good stores in Lake street, for never did they go shopping save in one another’s company. They read from the same book, were together by day and by night, thought the same thoughts, and such was their sweet close compact of friendship, would doubtless have worn the same bonnet but for obvious reasons, for an appreciation of which the anxious inquirer is referred to some fashionable milliner.

Time will sour the sweetest milk, thunder storms have been known to turn to acid the mildest and smallest beer. It is not known what changed to gall the brimming honey of the affection of Angelina Dobbs and Seraphina Hobbs. Probably it was only a miff at first, then they tiffed, and finally they wouldn’t speak when they met. Months have passed since all love died out between the pair.

In the heyday of their fondness, Miss Hobbs missed a bracelet, a valued and valuable ornament of a peculiar pattern. Miss Dobbs wept with her at her loss—“Never was so sorry in her life” as on that occasion—“would rather have lost her right hand than have her dear Seraphina so afflicted” all of which was taken by the bereaved Hobbs with a small per centage off, convincing her fully, of the reality and depth of Miss Angelina’s sympathy. Summer yielded to frost, July became December, and December died with the year. On New Year’s day Miss Hobbs resolved to be daguerreotyped. She made choice of Hesler, the wall of whose gallery are hung with gems of his art. Miss Hobbs, in quest of means to decide the details of style and price, looked closely through Hesler’s show rooms. Pictures met here eye at every turn. Life size, half size, quarter size and miniature, in oils, in water, India ink, in gilt frames, and without frames, photographic, stereoscopic, there they hung, and there stood Miss Hobbs and screamed.

It was only a little scream, and created no disturbance in Metropolitan block, but it relieved Miss Hobbs’ feelings, while she continued gazing at a modest ambrotype which lay on the counter waiting to receive its case. It was the picture of Miss Angelina Dobbs, the long lost friend, and on her arm—shade of past amity!—*the long lost bracelet!* Hesler had done his work well, he always does. The picture was complete. That was not more

truly the countenance of Miss Dobbs, which seemed to blench even behind its glass, and gather a glow not borrowed from carmine beneath the angry eye of the awakened and horrified Seraphina—that was not more truly the very mantilla which Miss Hobbs had helped her price and buy, than was the bracelet which stood out fully relieved on her arm, the identical missing bracelet lost by the mourning Hobbs, and lamented by faithless Angelina Dobbs.

Miss H. sought an interview with Miss D.—it was refused; wrote her a letter—it was returned. It was all up with Miss Hobbs, all over with the bracelet. Once resource remained, the law. An interview with Justice——on Thursday of last week resulted in placing a search warrant in the hands of a constable. The worthy official, it is supposed, did his duty, and got covered with glory, certain parts of his countenance excepted, where the deficiency has since been supplied by court plaster. From this it is to be inferred that Miss Hobbs only yielded to the search warrant under protest, sustained by a vigorous application of that decalogue of irate femininity, her ten digital nails.

The bracelet has been found. Miss Dobbs refuses to prosecute. The parties have compromised. The reporter is silent as to true names and localities, for he has been paid for his silence. There was, however, a point where his sense of duty to the public rose superior to mercenary considerations. Though offered a full package of tickets in the last drawn Chicago Joint Stock Association, (the next highest number to one of which drew the river front of lot 5, block 16, on the Calumet,) he cannot be hired to entirely suppress the narrative.

The moral of the tale is obvious. Young ladies, don't go to Hesler's to be daguerreotyped in stolen ornaments. Hesler would have exposed the daw who borrowed the peacock's feathers, had he sat for a miniature. Hesler's camera was the Pinkerton & Co. which detected the guilty Miss Dobbs. Allah il allah, great is photography.

[End of text.]

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#### EDITOR'S NOTES:

The use of the daguerreotype as a literary device of deceit detection began upon its disclosure. See the fictional tale discussed in Rachel Stuhlman, "Luxury, Novelty, Fidelity: Madame Foa's Daguerreian Tale," *Image: Journal of Photography and Motion Pictures of George Eastman House* (Rochester) 40:1-4 (special double issue) (1997): 2–61.

A stunning example of Hesler portrait work is a half-plate daguerreotype of Harriet Eliza Dart—reflected in a mirror—in the collection of Mathew R. Isenburg. The daguerreotype is reproduced in Susan S. Williams, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977): fig. 10 and dustcover; also in Joan Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans & Fashion, 1840–1900* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995): 153.

1. [http://image.eastmanhouse.org/files/GEH\\_1997\\_40\\_01-04.pdf](http://image.eastmanhouse.org/files/GEH_1997_40_01-04.pdf)

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