

S T U D I O · of · L A U R A · G I L P I N
317 · C H E Y E N N E · R D · C O L O R A D O · S P R I N G S · C O L O R A D O

In the issue of July 1927 of the Photographic Journal, issued by the Royal Photographic Society of London, was printed an excerpt from Julia Margaret Cameron's "ANNALS OF MY GLASS HOUSE". This contains much interesting information about her photography and also the following amusing comment.

"Miss Lydia Louisa Summerhouse Donkins informs Mrs. Cameron that she wishes to sit to her for her photograph. Miss Lydia Louisa Summerhouse Donkins is a carriage person, and therefore, could assure Mrs. Cammeron that she would arrive with her dress uncrumpled. Should Miss Lydia Louisa Summerhouse Donkins be satisfied with her picture, Miss Lydia Louisa Summerhouse Donkins has a friend who is also a carriage person who would also wish to have her likeness taken."

Mrs. Cameron answered " I answered Miss Lydia Louisa Summerhouse Donkins that Mrs. Cameron, not being a professional photographer, regretted she was unable to take her likeness but that had Mrs. Cameron been able to do so she would have very much preferred having her dress crumpled."

"A little Art teaching seemed a kindness, but I have more than once regretted that I could not produce the likeness of this individual with her letter affixed thereto.

This was when I was at L.H.H., to which

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place I had moved my camera for the sake of taking the great Carlyle. When I have such men before my camera my whole soul has endeavored to do its duty towards them in recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man. The photograph thus taken has been almost the embodiment of a prayer. Most devoutly was this feeling present to me when I photographed my illustrious and revered as well as beloved friend, Sir John Herschel. He was to me as a Teacher and High Priest. From my earliest girlhood I had loved and honored him, and it was after a friendship of 31 years' duration that the high task of giving his portrait to the nation was allotted to me. He had corresponded with me when the art was in its first infancy in the days of the Talbot-type and autotype. I was then residing in Calcutta, and scientific discoveries sent to that then benighted land were water to the parched lips of the starved, to say nothing of the blessed friendship so faithfully evinced.

When I returned to England the friendship was naturally renewed. I had already been made godmother to one of his daughters, and he consented to become godfather to my youngest son. A memorable day it was when my infant's three sponsors stood before the font, not acting by proxy, but all moved by real affection to me and to my husband to come in person, and surely Poetry, Philosophy and Beauty were never more fitly represented than when Sir John Herschel,

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Henry Taylor, and my own sister, Virginia Summers, were encircled round the little font of the Mortlake Church.

When I began to photograph I sent my first triumphs to this revered friend, and his hurrahs for my success I here give. The date is September 25th, 1866:-

My Dear Mrs. Cameron,-

This last batch of your photographs is indeed wonderful, and wonderful in two distinct lines of perfection. That head of the Mountain Nymph, Sweet Liberty (a little farouche and egarée, by the way, as if first let loose and half afraid that it was too good), is really a most astonishing piece of high relief. She is absolutely alive and thrusting out her head from the paper into the air. This is your own special style. The other of Summer Days is in the other manner, quite different, but very beautiful, and the grouping is perfect. Proserpine is awful. If ever she was "herself the fairest flower" her "cropping" by "Gloomy Dis" has thrown the deep shadows of Hades into not only the colour, but the whole cast and expression of her features. Christabel is a little too indistinct to my mind, but a fine head. The large profile is admirable, and altogether you seem resolved to out-do yourself on every fresh effort.'

This was encouragement eno' for me to feel myself held worthy to take this noble head of my great

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Master myself, but three years I had to wait patiently and longingly before the opportunity could offer.

Meanwhile I took another immortal head, that of Alfred Tennyson, and the result was that profile portrait which he himself designates as the "Dirty Monk". It is a fit representation of Isiah or of Jeremiah, and Henry Taylor said the picture was as fine as Alfred Tennyson's finest poem. The Laureate has since said if it that he likes it better than any photograph that has been taken of him except one by Mayall: that 'except' speaks for itself. The comparison seems too comical. It is rather like comparing one of Madame Tussaud's wax work heads to one of Woolner's ideal heroic busts. At this same time Mr. Watts gave me such encouragement that I felt as if I had wings to fly with."

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