

Margaret
Julia Cameron

by
Ida M. Tarbell

Evidence that this is an
I M T M.S. is to be
found on the reverse of
page 9.

A Great Woman Photographer.

The Friend and Portrayer of Tennyson, Browning
and Carlyle.

Julia Margaret Cameron and her Genius
with the Camera - Passages from her
Correspondence with Distinguished People.

London Copyright, 1895, by D. D. Mc Clure Limited

London — 1895.

Photography, we are told incessantly, is only a copying process. It gives us faithful outlines and literal renderings, but it does no more. It cannot add a sentiment to the face, nor can it interpret the power, the passion, the nobility, the humanity of the person it portrays. It can make a pretty or an ugly picture, according as the subject is agreeable or not to see; but tell you something of the nature of the person, give you an expression of his soul, that is quite beyond its power.

In spite, however, of this conventional notion, it is certain that outside of their works no better interpretation exists of the group of gifted Englishmen just passed away, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Sir John Herschel, Thomas Carlyle, Sir Henry Taylor, than a series of photographs made by a woman who was the personal friend of many of her subjects - Julia Cameron.

These photographs of Mrs. Cameron are not mere "likenesses".

These photographs of Mrs. Cameron are not mere "likenesses". They are real interpretations of individualities. They lack entirely the flatness, the mechanical literalness of the ordinary photograph. They are often almost titanic in their massive force, unforgettable in their originality, startling in their penetration and suggestiveness.

The first series of them appeared in England early in the sixties. They were met by an astonished applause from artists and from critics, which to one who has never examined them sounds like exaggeration. "We seem to be gazing upon so many ^{Luinis} ~~him~~, Leonardos, and Vandyckes," wrote one critic, in Macmillan's Magazine.

"The picture you send is like a Leonardo," Rossetti wrote Mrs. Cameron. "I looked over a set of your works at Colnaghi's, and really found them endlessly delightful, as if I had been through an Italian gallery."

G. F. Watts, the artist, was one of her greatest admirers. To him her photographs were "like old pictures", and he declared that they would satisfy posterity that there lived in 1866 an artist as great as Venice knew. One child's head was to him "like Phidias and more anti pre-Raphaelite than anything I have seen." He even goes so far as to say in one letter to her: "The sybil is quite wonderful. I

(2)
"do not like to say it is finer than Michael Angelo, for all my life I
"have been accustomed to consider them . . . as the grandest things
"that could be produced, but it is fully as fine in sentiment and cha-
"racter, whilst it is truer to nature and richer in light and shadow.
"It is so wonderful as a picture that I forgot to think of it as a
"photograph. It is only in returning to it that I find it a perfect
"specimen."

Several qualities combined to produce these effects so generally
compared to those of the old masters; the choice of subjects had much
to do with it. Mrs. Cameron knew what was noble and beautiful, and
she never attempted to do anything with what was in itself either
banal or ugly; the pose chosen was always sincere and characteristic;
the arrangement of light and shade was such as to produce a variety
of tones and strong contrasts, and frequently a concentration of
light Rembrandtesque in its effect; this handling of the light pro-
duced a suggestion of colour so strong that in some of the portraits
one does not notice its absence; above all, there was a sentiment in
the pictures which was a veritable revelation of the personality.

And yet it was photography. But photography not as a trade, or
an amusement, but as an art handled with awe and devotion. Mrs. Came-
ron had her conception before she began her work. She sought her
ideal under her camera with a feverish earnestness, she knew when she
found ^{it}, and with utter disregard of focus, clearness, position on the
plate, she seized it with joy and reverence, as an artist his image,
at the instant of its passing, and having once caught it she never
felt it necessary to ruin it by retouching. *Mrs. Cameron's extraordinary
qualities.*

No ordinary woman would have had the wit, the faith, the courage

No ordinary woman would have had the wit, the faith, the courage to use a medium in this unconventional way. Nor was Julia Cameron an ordinary woman. By nature and by experience she was altogether an unusual creature. The daughter of an Indian civil servant of high position, educated in England, but passing nearly all her girlhood in India, she had met and married at the Cape of Good Hope a man of great ability, a jurist and philosopher - Charles Hay Cameron -, who ~~after~~ ^{was} *as Law Member of council in Calcutta,* ~~succeeded, to the place in the Indian service once filled by~~ Lord Macaulay.

For a long time at the head of English society in Calcutta, allied by birth, education, and position with the intelligence and the high-born of her race, she found herself when she returned to England, in the forties, in relations with the most interesting society of the times. Sir John Herschel, Tennyson, Lord Hardinge had been her friends from girlhood; with the first she had been in correspondence during all her life in India. She was thrown in contact with G. F.

Watts

the artist, Holman Hunt, Robert Browning, Rossetti, Lecky, Spedding, ^{Thackeray} Annie ~~Thackeray~~ and with a score of other interesting people. She won them all at once. "It was indeed impossible that we should not grow "fond of her - impossible for us, and not less so for the many whom "her genial, ardent and generous nature has captivated since," wrote Sir Henry Taylor in his Autobiography. "There are sixteen of us here, "and we all love you," wrote Charles Darwin to her once.

She had, in fact, one of those bounteous, unselfish, never tiring natures, which finds its only satisfaction in pouring out gifts and favours and services upon those about it.

"How we go on with Mrs. Cameron!" writes Sir Henry Taylor. "She "keeps showering upon us her 'barbaric pearls and gold', Indian "shawls, turquoise bracelets, inlaid portfolios, ivory elephants, etc, "and she writes us letters of six pages long all about ourselves, "thinking that we can never be sufficiently sensible of the magnitude "and enormity of our virtues." And later, "The transference of her "personal effects is going on day after day, and I think that shortly "Cameron will find himself left with nothing but his real property."

All her friends make a complaint of her generosity, and Tennyson scolds her roundly in one letter for something she has given him when her coffers are low, and declares he does not want it and will keep it only until she comes around.

It was not only gifts: she kept open house and delighted in

It was not only gifts: she kept open house and delighted in bringing people together who could be useful or agreeable to each other. Among ^{the} many letters from great men, she ^{has} left. is one from Robert Browning, declining an invitation of hers. It not only shows her indefatigable ^{social generosity} ~~in this sort of thing~~, but the inimitable skill of Browning in refusing gracefully to do things.

In this instance she had tried to bring Professor Jowett and Browning together, and he writes six pages to excuse himself. "I really can fancy few things kinder nor so kind in their way, as this letter of yours with its offer of an opportunity which, had it never fallen to my lot before, would be almost inestimably precious, but you are to know that I already have the honour and delight of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Jowett - warranted indeed by his own kindness, and may even boast of his friendship. You could not be

3 ^{These letters are in the possession of Mr. H.H. Cameron of London, by whose courtesy they were placed at the disposition of McClure's Magazine.}

"aware, however, of what was a happy event indeed for me; and I am
 "sure I can throw myself back for a moment into my earlier condition
 "of ignorance with respect to Mr. Jowett, and so feel all I owe to
 "you who would give me what I so fortunately have and, I trust, shall
 "always keep." He refuses to go to see Tennyson and his wife. "The
 "simple truth is I made a resolution about staying at home when I
 "first returned to London (with regard to what I supposed the interest
 "of the boy) and was forced to keep it - one could not pick and
 "choose, or excuse one's self for not choosing. . . . I know I have
 "never written to decline an invitation without, as I sat down, cor-
 "roborating my resolve by saying to myself, 'Having refused to go and
 "'see Tennyson and his wife, I can easily refuse in this case'. . .
 "but, let only the height of my present hopes be attained, and let
 "Robert find himself at this year's end and at Balliol, then Tennyson,
 "even should he no longer care to bid me come, shall assuredly find
 "me knocking at his door, pilgrim-fashion - and with that enterprise
 "shall my pilgrimage begin." Jan. 1. '67.

Nor was it only her friends to whom she was good: the outcast,
 the sad, the wretched, were equally taken up. One of her friends tells
 of going to dinner one day with her, to find three or four strange
 people there with whom she was having a cosy time. She had to ask
 their names to present them. She had met them on the boat that day.
 They were tourists, and a little lonesome, and she had asked them in
 to dinner.

In time of trial among her friends she was unwearying. No jour-

In time of trial among her friends she was unwearying. No journey was too long, no fatigue too great, no work too hard. Her services to the Tennysons were such that Tennyson himself adored her. To him she was "Dear Julia Cameron", "My dear Julia ^{C.}"; and once he writes her, "I shall never till the hour of my death forget your great kindness. . . . God bless you for ever."

He not only ^{loved}~~loved~~ her, he obeyed her. ^{had great influence over him}~~"She kept him in order,"~~ said Mr. Cameron, her son, to me in London, "and when she said 'Alfred, you must do this', he always did it though he grumbled in his gruff way, which underneath was really the tenderest way."

Among her letters is one from Tennyson which is an amusing example of this. ^{Tennyson had promised to give her the manuscript of "Guinevere."}~~She wants a manuscript for someone.~~ It has disappeared. She tells him he has promised it, and she must have it, and he writes:

34

"If I have made what seems to you a promise or half-promise, I must write it out for you again."

Then in a postscript he puts in a half-cross little remonstrance.

^{That}~~What~~ is a promise - and I am + sorry that I have made it! - "

^
"Never mind!"

+ "for what a bore it will

be, O Julia!"

Some very (5) Ben

Herselle Regrets the Fourth of June

5-X

[Handwritten signature]

...of the artist's career comes to him from Sir

wisdom of allowing him to choose such a career.

An admirable letter on the artist's career comes to her from Sir G. F. Watts, with whom she was through many years a close friend, and

~~whom she had consulted about allowing her son to become an artist.~~

"If H. had 500 year to come into," writes he, "and inexpensive tastes and habits, believing as I do that art is the most delightful

Sir G. F. Watts on the career of a man II

(6)

"of all professions, I would say by all means encourage him to adopt
"it; but one has no right to make experiments with young life. An
"early aptitude does not prove all that is necessary. Many a one has
"written admirable youthful verses who has not turned out to be a
"poet. The age, too, is singularly given to painting with words and
"with pigments, so that the imitative faculty is less striking than it
"formerly would have been. To advise the pursuit of art would be to
"advise the renunciation of all chances of success in life out of
"that profession, for it demands a separate education and exclusive
"homage.

Literature a Better Profession than Art.

6
"Given a similar ability for literature, I would rather advise
"looking forward to it as a pursuit though it is less a profession than
"art, because a man may win his way and excel in it, while following
"many another occupation. A good general education has carried him so
"far on in his way that imagination and practice will do the rest, but
"as I said before, art will not be satisfied with anything short of
"undivided allegiance. A man must give himself up to it body and
"soul, for he must take a high place, or be less fortunate than he
"would be under any other circumstances. Photography and the very ge-
"neral tendency to take up art with, I think, sufficiently prove that:
"The future of a youth is too serious a thing to be trifled with, so
"I would on no account flatter him into attaching himself to a pursuit
"in which anything less than perfect success will be melancholy, and
"which will make the after adoption of any other a real pain. Let
"him go on with his sketching and keep up his love for art, but for
"the present only as an amusement and at odd times, but steadily im-
"proving himself in general education; and if by the time he has fi-
"nished at the Charterhouse he shows the same decided inclination and
"has made any great advance, then I think it would be cruel to prevent
"him from choosing the delightful profession he will be qualified for.

"Meantime, the better to qualify him, I should like to recommend
"perhaps a little more attention than usual to History and some of
"the exact sciences, especially optics and music; this last I esti-
"mate very highly in the artist's case, as supplying him with a source
"of recreation most in unison with his own profession, and is, though
"a separate endowment, strangely adapted to the artistic tempera-
"ment. I have scarcely known any one very highly gifted as an artist

"who was not also a musician in sentiment. These special studies I
"recommend will in no way interfere with his future prospects, if he
"takes to the civil service or any profession open to him, and will
"prove extremely valuable if he takes to art."

There are several delightful letters from Watts on their discus-
sions, from two or three of which I cannot help quoting. Here is one
on Tennyson's Arthur, which is particularly good.

Sir G. F. Watts on Tennyson's "Arthur"

"I have been thinking a good deal over our slight discussion upon
"The character of Tennyson's Arthur, and cannot at all understand how
"it comes that you think it so little human. I feel that it is essen-
"tially human in those qualities that are characteristic of humanity
"alone, as distinguished from the lower animals who at best possess
"only intelligence; evidence of a sort of divine spirit -- to be
"found often very unexpectedly, and in very inferior natures, when
"circumstances sufficiently forcible to bring it out occur. It is not
"to be supposed that all those who went down so heroically in the
"Birkenhead ~~was~~ were so many Arthurs, yet Arthur himself could not
"have shown himself greater. The difference is that in some this di-
"vine spirit only shows itself upon extreme occasions, 'and straight
"is cold again', whilst in sublime examples it illuminates the pro-
"gress and glorifies the end of a life. . . . ~~Not~~ Ordinary men under
"strong circumstances have done things for the world to wonder at, and
"great characters kept up to the mark by great conditions have shown
"what humanity may arrive at; and if none blaze out like Arthur, none
"have been placed in circumstances so perfectly favourable. To be
"great hemmed in on every side by what is small and ignoble, is diffi-

"great hemmed in on every side by what is small and ignoble, is diffi-
"cult; yet not infrequently even the muddish part of society is
"lighted up by some lovely ray of the divine spirit, and I conceive
"that circumstances would peel the crust and show the hero in many
"cases we should never dream of. Given the conditions of the fabulous
"life of Arthur, surrounded by and looked up to as chief and superior
"by knights only less than himself, vowed to an enterprise calling
"forth all the highest sentiments and influences by supernatural expe-
"riences, I think it is not difficult to imagine that human nature
"taken at its best and receiving such fostering, would be little short
"of divine in its appearance. Even when I look back to the time when
"I had illusions, and remember how enthusiastically I held to romantic

"possibilities (or rather impossibilities) and recall how I endeavour-
"ed to qualify myself for a beautiful destiny, it seems to me that in
"spite of most unfavourable conditions there may be many Arthurs around
"us.

"My old spark of exaltation was easily trampled out, my apprecia-
"tion of what is right and noble has not let me walk in the dirt; but
"I no longer put on my armour and thirst for high adventure. I do
"not, however, measure others by myself, except in believing that most
"are capable of as much, and that of that most, the majority are
"strong enough to continue the quest. I rejoice to think so, and
"hope that the debility, mental and physical, which unfits me to en-
"counter discouragement will not be so gravely considered that I shall
"forfeit my spurs. Even yet I hold on to romance, but not as of old
"with hope of a delightful denouement."

*Walter Dingley Conner for
dogma*

In writing of a volume of Martineau Watts says, "I confess the
"older I grow, the less I care about dogma of any kind. There are
"certain grand truths at the roots of almost every religion, truths
"become every day more clear, and every step taken in science and eve-
"ry increase of our knowledge of nature and natural laws proves them
"to be so, and these I should hold, for the best of it is so hidden
"and mysterious that we cannot find it or in any way understand it;
"I must believe that the intention is that we should not know, or that
"at least it is not necessary to us.

"For modes of truth let angry zealots fight

His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

"For modes of truth let angry zealots fight

His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

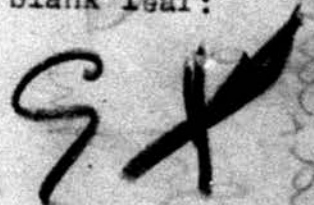
"I see such wisdom and beauty in all that my limited intelligence will enable me to understand, that I feel perfect confidence and trust, by no means in my release from earnest and even stern endeavour after the right. The right being to my comprehension entwined in the two precepts, 'Love God' (that is, all we can conceive of purity and devotion above ordinary considerations), 'and our neighbour as one's self'."

a letter from Spedding.

In ^a ~~this~~ letter of Spedding's he has a paragraph on his own ~~books~~ books, copies of which he had given her and for which she wished his autograph, "to preserve them for my children," she wrote, ^{which} is worth quoting as a contribution to the puzzling subject of what to do with copies from authors. ① 14

① "I have," says Spedding, "in my possession a very good model
"an inscription intended for a purpose exactly like yours - with the
"additional merit of showing the value of it. In a large paper copy
"of Robert Stephens' first collection of Bacon's letters, this is
"written in a large fine hand at the top of the blank leaf:

'This booke given me by my dear son
Robert Stephens and I desire it may
be kept in the family for his sake.
'Ann Stephens.'



"... Perhaps her children had no children to follow. But I don't
"think that was the real reason why it came into my hands. It found
"its way by the nature of things; from the place where it was not
"wanted to the place where it was. And I hope you will not do any-
"thing to my immortal volumes which shall interfere with their liber-
"ty - to do their own work in their own way. Their work is to supply
"the few people who take the same sort of interest in the subject
"that I have done, with the sort of help which I myself worked for
"and had to find for myself. I do not expect many people to begin to
"do now what few people have ever been in the habit of doing - that
"is, to read ^{Bacon's} ~~writings~~ writings or care about his life. But I do expect
"that the few will find that they have got what they wanted. ... Peo-
"ple are not asked to love or admire or worship. What you or I or
"anybody else think or feel about him is no concern of his. He is
"long past all that. And what concerns us is only that we regard him,
"if we regard him at all, as he really was - neither better nor worse,
"a man who, under many difficulties inward and outward, worked well
"to mankind, and tried to do good; but failed, partly because he was
"not wise enough, partly because he was not clever enough, and partly
"because he was not good enough. Why he was not wiser, clever, and
"better, I don't know; but I know that I cannot help it, and must
"report him as I find him."

5-1/2 Almost immediately Mrs. Cameron's photography began to attract ^{who had from the first taken a lively interest in her work,} the attention of artists, Sir John Herschel gave the first encouragement which made her resolve to go on. [^] In a letter written September 25, 1866, he said:

"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 just 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 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."

A few months later Herschel

Herschel, April 23, 1867 writes of an envoi of photographs:

5-
 "You are beautiful to profusion! And everything you send surpasses the former sendings. Sic iter ad astra! - the one of the old paterfamilias with his black cap on, is I think the climax of photographic art, and beats hollow everything I ever beheld in photography before! (His own portrait taken by her at his own house).

P Mrs. Cameron undoubtedly made a ~~very~~ ⁴ mistake, as ~~Spedding~~ ^{41X} hints, in attempting allegorical groups, that is, in trying to make pictures out of photographs. Her success with heads, in making noble interpretations of faces, made her hardy; she tried to rival the masters in compositions of an elaborate kind. She arranged a series drawn from the "Idylls of the King", a large number of religious pieces as "Faith, Hope & Charity", "The Salutation after Giotto", etc., and many fanciful ones. But here she did not reckon with her material, ~~and whatever art she arranged her composition - and frequently~~ it was with considerable - she had only a tableau vivant. Now such a composition, to give an impression of ideality, must have the effect of distance, of footlights and of ^{curtains} gauze between the spectator and the stage. Otherwise, it is ~~simply~~ a group of people posing, and is hard and inartistic. The effect of mystery and of profundity which Mrs. Cameron secured in her portraits, she failed entirely to get in her groups. They are literal. The machinery is evident. The effect is merely that of a set of people posing, and often has a bit of grotesqueness about it as a result. They lack totally the ideality of her heads. The latter, however, it is hard to over-praise. Such a picture as that of Sir Henry Taylor ~~given here~~ is a veritable Leonardo. ^{Here} This Maud might have posed for Ghirlandaio; this head of Mrs. Leslie Stephens is like a virgin of Botticelli. And it will be for these heads and for those of Browning, Carlyle, Herschel, Holman Hunt, that Mrs. Cameron will be remembered and rightly, for they are the work of a genius. ^{Interesting Letters to} Mrs. Cameron's ^{from} notable ^{of people} friends and acquaintances

By all of the remarkable group of men among whom she moved and

By all of the remarkable group of men among whom she moved and by whom her work was so highly regarded, as ^{we} have seen, Mrs. Cameron was considered a woman of great superiority. The interest with which they helped her, the pleasure with which they wrote to her and talked with her, the docility with which they submitted to her enthusiastic plans, are fully shown in the series of interesting letters to her which are preserved by her son. Some of these letters discuss questions of art, others of practical life, others topics of the times. All treat, whatever they touch, in a free large way. With Mr. Cameron's consent, I have taken certain passages from these letters which have an interest, not only as free expressions of opinion by the great men who wrote them, but which are valuable in fixing Mrs. Cameron's place in their lives.

9) Rossetti writes her of some she had sent him: "The finest of all these as photographs seems to me to be 'Selina and Daphne'. In the latter especially, the noble way in which the hair is lost in the background and the oak leaves come dark against the dazzling flesh, are points of grand style, which afford a splendid lesson to a painter."

And these friends gave her something quite as useful as praise. They constantly gave her ~~useful~~ criticism. In the same letter from Rossetti, in which the above extract is found, he says of a fanciful name which she has put to one of her photographs: "Will you allow me one word of modest remonstrance as to 'Cynthia riding the whirlwind'? Why Cynthia? Where is the whirlwind? The title seems to me inimical to the gravity with which a fine study of this sort should be viewed, and moreover, not to elevate in any real way what is much more interesting as a simple rendering of nature in a pictorial spirit. However, when titles have to be hauled over the coals by the critic, it is a pretty sure sign how little hold the work itself affords to his severity. My impression is certainly that you should publish a selection of your works in a volume."

Watts criticises her sharply sometimes, declaring one "too white in the lights," one is "unequal, one eye is darker than the other, and there is but little graduation of tint black and white," one is a "little dirty-looking", from another "the hands are almost gone", another is "a smudge."

Herschel is decidedly practical in his counsels. After one visit he writes: "Since you left me I have been getting more and more uneasy about your free use of such dreadful poison as Cyanide of potassium, letting it run over your hands so profusely! Pray! pray! be more cautious," and then he copies for her a recipe for cleaning the hands, given by a photographer who had suffered from the cyanide.

54
began to see wonderful things with the new lens, things she recognised at once as surpassingly beautiful. With ^{the} supreme indifference to methods and technique ^{which we have already noted.} she began to take pictures according to her own sweet fancy. The results were so fine that photography became the business of her life. She turned the coal house into a dark room, and the chicken coop into a studio, and she inveigled high and low in to ^{ing} pose for her. Mrs. Cameron's notable subjects - How she secured Carlyle

Unquestionably much of the success of Mrs. Cameron's photography lies in the remarkable persons she secured to sit for her. Such was

~~Such was~~ her spell ^{over} her eminent friends, poets, scholars, philosophers, that she practically secured as "subjects" everybody in England who was "worth while." Tennyson she ordered into the hen-house frequently, and once even put a big white frill around his neck ^{and "took" him -} a cliché still in existence. Sir Henry Taylor she rigged up in a score of ways; he was Friar Lawrence with Juliet, Prospero with Miranda, Ahasuerus with Queen Esther. He would swing ^a sceptre made of a poker or wear a gown made of a bed spread without a murmur, and her dignified scholarly husband - a man with the head and snowy crown of a patriarch - she turned into all sorts of fanciful creatures. And so contagious was her delightful unconventionality that they did all this with utter indifference to the fact that from ordinary notions they were making fools of themselves. If they did not come when she sent for them, she went to them. Her portrait of Carlyle ⁺ she got by way of laying the crabbed philosopher in the street. "I well remember the day the photograph was taken," says Mr. Cameron. "Carlyle was riding by our house in London, and my mother called to him but he did not hear. A boy ran after him, and instead of being cross he tipped the lad, came back at once to my mother with the most courtly bows and was photographed there and then."

It was of this photo that Carlyle

It was of this photo that Carlyle wrote Mrs. Cameron,

"Front face has something of likeness, though terrifically ugly
"and wee-beerons. My candid opinion.

T. Carlyle.

"Chelsea. 9 June 1867."

Many sittings by persons with whom she was personally unacquaint-
ed were arranged for her by friends, for many felt as Lecky and Prof.
Jowett, that these photographs if they could be preserved would be the
best key outside of their works, which posterity would have of the
great men of the period. Holman Hunt, for example, who was greatly
interested in her success, ^{once} went to all sorts of pains to secure Mil-
lais for a sitting. Millais did not sit on that particular occasion
because, as Hunt writes, "the sun has burnt his nose, and he is having
"his eye doctored, but he will sit when he comes back to town." And
Hunt adds, "I am really anxious that you should regard me as sincerely

See McClure's Magazine for December 1893.

"interested in your success in photography, and in your hope of covering your expenses by it. I would do anything to help you in this hope. So if you think of any service I can do for you, pray do not forget to ask me."

Not all her friends were so enthusiastic however. Probably the most intelligent ^d _nverse criticism she received was this from James Spedding, who was one of her intimate friends.

"With regard to the photographs themselves, since you ask for my opinion, I should say that they are both of them very favourable specimens of your work, but that they do not convert me to your side of the question on which we differed. If I recollect right, I explained to you once at large why I thought that indistinctness (which is the quality you aim at) is no merit but a demerit in drawing; and that the very best representation of real people acting emotions can never be a bright example of imaginative art. Acting is a fine art in its way, and it is one I have always taken great pleasure in and had a great respect for. It has the advantage of life and motion, and can thereby produce effects which ~~the painter or sculptor~~ the painter or sculptor cannot produce. But what painter or sculptor, wanting to represent Hamlet or Ophelia in colours or in marble, would be content with the exactest copy of the very best representations of Hamlet or Ophelia that the stage can show? He would surely find that he could imagine a more perfect representation. Your 'Kiss of Peace' is, I think, the

"a more perfect representation. Your 'Kiss of Peace' is, I think, the
"best thing of that kind I ever saw; but if Watts had it on his ea-
"sel, do not you think that he would find that he could improve it?
"To real portraits in photography this objection does not apply, pro-
"vided the view is well chosen. For I am not in favour of 'idealiza-
"tion' in portraits, as it is commonly understood - and I believe it
"is possible to find in every face an aspect which represents the
"owner more perfectly (in the highest sense of representation) than
"the best artist could. But then I want that aspect truly represent-
"ed, and not smudged. I know the use of smudging. The artist who
"cannot draw the forms quite right, conceals and partly removes the
"error by confusing them. But this is precisely the correction which
"the photograph does not want. The one thing it can do, if properly
"managed, is to draw the forms correctly. By making them indistinct

"you make them less correct, less like the object than they would otherwise have been, and the forms which you confuse and obliterate most completely are those in the representation of which photography is most perfect - the most delicate ones. Every photographed portrait which I see - done out of focus - supplies on its face a simple test by which you may measure the less obvious by the more obvious imperfections of it. Look at the hair; and believe that the cheek is more like a cheek, the eye like an eye, the mouth like a mouth, the chin like a chin, than the hair is like hair. Yet the photograph will draw hair, if you give it the chance, with a perfection which I never saw equalled in black and white by any human hand.

"It is vain for us to attempt to convert each other on this point, the difference between us being matter of taste, and not of fact and being fundamental. What you think a beauty, I think a defect and vice versa."