

A recently found daguerreotype of Henry Dunant

by Bernard Lescaze

There are very few extant photographs of Henry Dunant. In an article printed in 1959,¹ Bernard Gagnebin gave a list of seven portraits, while Daisy Mercanton in 1971 found there were eleven, plus one painting on enamel by Charles Dunant.² Most of them portray Henry Dunant in the last years of his life at Heiden; three on 12 August 1895, two in 1901, and the last in 1908. In fact there are now only five known pictures of Dunant as a young man in the days of his prosperity. Apart from the portrait recently discovered by the Henry Dunant Institute³, there are the two photographs taken at the time when the Red Cross was founded, two others in 1855 when Dunant was 27 years old, and only one around 1850, showing Dunant in the company of Jean-Gabriel Eynard and his wife.

The photograph reproduced in this issue of *International Review* was probably taken also some time around 1850 and is a daguerreotype published in 1973 by the *Revue du Vieux-Genève*, on the occasion of an exhibition of the daguerreotypes made by Eynard⁴. A note on its back identified the two young men on either side of Eynard, the famous philhellene, by the door of the landau, as Ernest de Traz and Henry Dunant. Until now, nobody saw the interest of this photograph.

Very little is known about the friendship between Jean-Gabriel Eynard and Henry Dunant. Eynard's passion for photography is more familiar to us. In 1840, this financier and philanthropist already owned two cameras and had taken many daguerreotypes. In 1842, he was even

¹ See Bernard Gagnebin, "Les sept portraits d'Henry Dunant", in *Le Monde et la Croix-Rouge*, vol. XXXIX (1959), pp. 4-5.

² See Daisy Mercanton, *Henry Dunant, Essai bio-bibliographique*, Geneva, 1971, pp. 115 ff.

³ Portrait published in *International Review of the Red Cross*, March-April 1978.

⁴ See Michel Auer, "Jean-Gabriel Eynard-Lullin photographe" in *Revue du Vieux-Genève*, 1973, pp. 65-68.

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invited by King Louis-Philippe, with whom he was friendly, to take pictures of the whole royal family in the gardens of the Château de Neuilly. A charming account of this episode by Jean-Gabriel Eynard himself has been preserved.¹ At that time Eynard possessed no less than five cameras which were so cumbersome that he left most of them in Paris. This wealthy amateur photographer apparently continued to turn out daguerreotypes, despite the development of other techniques, for many of his pictures were taken in the years 1850 to 1852, during which period he showed also much interest in stereoscopy.²

Although many of Eynard's pictures bear a date, this particular one of Dunant does not, nor is the name of the spot it was taken mentioned. Most probably, it was at "Fleur d'eau", Eynard's summer residence at Rolle, with Eynard himself sitting in the carriage. One of the young men in the picture has not been identified. The one half seen to the left of the carriage door is Ernest de Traz (1830-1900), son of Charles and Caroline de Budé-Lullin, one of the twenty-six founders, together with Dunant and others,³ of the Geneva Young Men's Christian Association, in 1855.

This picture shows Henry Dunant at the age of not more than twenty-two. His hair is cut short and he sports a small moustache. He holds his hat in one hand and the lapel of his frock-coat with the other. It is the only one of Dunant's portraits in which he is seen in a natural setting, at an outdoor party. The fixedly serene look apparent in the posed portraits is absent; on the contrary, the founder of the Red Cross looks gay and carefree. Judging by the abundant vegetation, it is probable that this photograph was taken towards late spring or early summer.

This is one of the earliest photographic representations, if not the very first, of Henry Dunant preserved for posterity by Jean-Gabriel Eynard with the help of Daguerre's magic box. It gives a vivid idea of the young Henry Dunant and his social surroundings.

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¹ This account, unfortunately not in full, may be found in Edouard Chapuisat: *Jean-Gabriel Eynard et son temps, 1775-1863*, Geneva, 208 pp., no date indicated.

² The author gives an account of Eynard's early efforts as a photographer in a paper, to be published shortly, entitled "Genève inédite vue par ses photographes", which he read to the Fine Arts students at the Société des Arts in January 1978.

His warmest thanks go to Miss Marie-Claude Junod, who urged him to publish this picture and gave a number of useful suggestions.

³ See, in particular, John Jaques, *Histoire des Unions chrétiennes de jeunes gens de la Suisse romande*, Geneva, [1902], p. 12; and Clarence P. Shedd, "Henri Dunant et le développement international des Y.M.C.A." in *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève*, vol. IX (1947-1950), pp. 218-242.

HENRY DUNANT AND FRIENDS, ABOUT 1850

