

Claudet, "Question of Priority," (John Goddard and use of bromine) March 1848

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XXXII. *Question of Priority respecting the Discovery of the accelerating process in the Daguerreotype operation.* By A. CLAUDET, Esq.

To the Editors of the Philosophical Magazine and Journal.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE lately heard that Mr. Goddard knew as far back as the year 1840 that bromide of iodine was more sensitive to light than iodine alone in the Daguerreotype process; and that a short letter merely mentioning the fact written by him was inserted at the time in the Literary Gazette, 12th Dec., 1840.

Having myself until now had all the honour of the discovery of the accelerating properties of chlorine and bromine combined with iodine, I am happy to be the first to bring Mr. Goddard's claim before the public, who will have to bestow on him the share of merit for what he has done prior to my communication to the Royal Society, which was read at the meeting of the 10th of June 1841. I have acted openly. After having made my communication to the Royal Society, I made the same to the Academic des Sciences the 22nd of the same month, and my discoveries have been mentioned in all the treatises on photography; and until now, neither Mr. Goddard nor any other person has yet contested publicly that I was the first inventor of the accelerating process in the Daguerreotype operation.

It is strange that Mr. Goddard's letter should have been unknown and unnoticed by all writers on photography either English or foreign. If Mr. Goddard had found the means to avail himself with certainty of the properties of bromide of iodine, if he did not wish to make a secret of it, he should have written at the time a full and explicit paper on the subject, and published it through the medium of some scientific society or journal. In question of priority, it is not enough to have stated that we have made the discovery of a new agent; we must prove it by enabling others to test it and to apply its properties.

It must be observed that bromide of iodine is a compound very little known in chemistry, that its real proportions have not yet been accurately established, that it is excessively difficult to form the mixture of the two elements in the proper relation to each other, which gives the increase of sensitiveness to the Daguerreotype plate, and that excess of one of the two elements destroys that sensitiveness. Mr. Goddard should have stated these proportions, and the mode of applying the coating on the plate. Bromide of iodine alone is not sufficient in the preparation of the Daguerreotype plate; its vapours must be applied when the plate has already been coated with pure iodine. This was an

important feature in my discovery, which rendered it at once most valuable to photographers.

Nevertheless the name of Mr. Goddard should be honourably mentioned in the history of the progress of photography; not only for the discovery to which I have just alluded, but also for having been one of the first in England who investigated with zeal, enthusiasm, and scientific abilities, all the phaenomena connected with this admirable invention.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,
Your most obedient Servant,

London, Feb. 23, 1848.

A. CLAUDET.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

For Goddard's initial announcement, see John F. Goddard, "Valuable Improvement in Daguerreotype," *Literary Gazette; and Journal of the Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c.* (London) No. 1247 (12 December 1840): 803.¹

See also Jabez Hughes, "The Discoverer of the Use of Bromine in Photography: a few facts and an Appeal," *British Journal of Photography* (London) (15 December 1863): 487–88.²

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8400004_GODDARD_LIT_GAZETTE_1840-12-12.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8630001_HUGHES_BRIT_JOURN_PHOTOGRAPH_1863-12-15.pdf

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