

Daguerre to Hunt, "The effect being instantaneous," 19 February 1841

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Robert Hunt, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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Manuscript letter:

Louis J. M. Daguerre to Robert Hunt, dated 19 February 1841.

Original line breaks preserved. The folded letter is postmarked 22 Feb 1841. Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library & Museum, New York (accession # MA 1167). Use of material courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

Robert Hunt, Esq^{re}

Secretary for the Royal Cornwall

Polytechnic Society. Falmouth

Sir,

I have received your very amiable letter and I wish I could give you an answer more suitable to your wishes and to my desire of being either agreeable or useful to you. But though the principle of my new discovery is certain, I am determined not to publish it before I have succeeded in making the execution of it as easy for every body as it is to myself. I have announced it immediately at the Royal Academy of Paris merely to [illeg.] date is to ascertain my right to the priority of the invention. By means of that new process it shall be possible to fix the image of objects in motion such as public ceremonies market places covered with people, cattles &^a. The effect being instantaneous. —

I sincerely regret to be unable for the present to give you any more precise information and I hope for another opportunity of being of some service to you.

I am, Sir, very respectfully
your obedient S^v. [servant—Ed.]

Daguerre

Paris the 19th of February

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Robert Hunt mentions this correspondence in 1844:

As long back as 1841, it was announced that M. Daguerre had discovered a process by which an instantaneous effect was produced; and in a communication with which the author was favoured from Daguerre himself he states, "By means of that new process it shall be possible to fix the images of objects in motion, such as public ceremonies, market-places covered with people, cattle" &c. But, up to the present time, some great obstacle appears to have interfered with the successful practical use of this new and important discovery. It has been stated, and apparently on satisfactory evidence, that electricity is the agent employed to assist the operations of Light in bringing about the required change.¹

It is possible that Hunt wrote to Daguerre with the hope of incorporating Daguerre's "improvements" in his 1841 book, [Robert Hunt,] *A Popular Treatise on the Art of Photography, including Daguerreotype, and all the New Methods of Producing Pictures by the Chemical Agency of Light* (Glasgow: Richard Griffin and Company, 1841).

Daguerre did eventually publish his "improvements." See Louis Daguerre, *Nouveau Moyen de Préparer la Couche Sensible des Plaques Destinées à recevoir les Images Photographes, par M. Daguerre. Lettre à M. Arago* (Paris: Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1844).² See also Louis Daguerre, "On a New Mode of Preparing Plates Destined to Receive Photographic Images," *Chemist; or, Reporter of Chemical Discoveries and Improvements* (London) 2:18 (June 1844): 260–63.³

Daguerre's admitted his "improved" process as being "rather complicated," The process received scant notice nor incorporation into practical use.

1. Robert Hunt, *Researches on Light: and Examination of all the Phenomena connected with the Chemical and Molecular Changes produced by the Influence of the Solar Rays; embracing all the Known Photographic Processes, and New Discoveries in the Art* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844): 89.
2. Available from the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *BnF/Gallica*: www.gallica2.bnf.fr. Text version also available from Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/16260>.
3. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8440002_DAG-PROCESS_CHEMIST_1844-06.pdf

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